

# ROSA LUXEMBURG



## READER



PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &  
DISCUSSIONS  
FOR LAND & FREEDOM

An introductory word to the 'anarchive'  
"Anarchy is Order!"

*'I must Create a System or be enslav'd by  
another Man's.  
I will not Reason & Compare: my business  
is to Create'  
(William Blake)*

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism – of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives—a 'new' kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as 'Anarchy is order', 'Property is theft',...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The 'anarchive' or 'anarchist archive' Anarchy is Order ( in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the '**principles, propositions and discussions**' of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don't belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the 'new anarchism' outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this

project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

**‘Anarchy Is Order’ does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.**

**Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing from the CD that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts ,...Become your own anarchiv!!!**

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchiv offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*‘demons of flesh and blood, that sway scepters down  
here;  
and the dirty microbes that send us dark diseases and  
wish to  
squash us like horseflies;  
and the will-‘o-the-wisp of the saddest ignorance’.*  
(L-P. Boon)

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us.  
Don’t mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism,cooperation can be send  
to

[A.O@advalvas.be](mailto:A.O@advalvas.be)

A complete list and updates are available on this  
address, new texts are always

**welcome!!**

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# **THE REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA**

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On January 22nd in Petersburg [January 9th according to the Russian used Julian calendar], the first mass revolutionary rising of the Russian proletariat against absolutism was put down 'victoriously' by the terrorist government, that is, it was drowned in the blood of thousands of defenceless workers, in the blood of the murdered men, women and children of the people [Bloody Sunday]. It is possible that - at least in Petersburg itself - a lull in the revolutionary movement has set in. The tidal wave is now surging from Petersburg, from the north, down over the huge empire, and is engulfing, one after another, all the great industrial cities of Russia. Anyone who had expected the revolution to triumph at one blow, anyone in Petersburg who, following the 'victory' of the policy of blood and iron, might now wish to abandon himself, depending on whose side he takes, to a pessimistic defeatism or to a premature exultation at the restoration of 'order' - such a person would only prove that the history of revolutions with its inner iron laws has for him remained a sealed book.

It took an eternity - at least when measured against revolutionary impatience and against the agony of the Russian people - for the fire of revolution to kindle into a bright blaze beneath the centuries-old ice-coating of absolutism. It might and surely will take a very long period of terrible struggles, alternating between popular victories and defeats, exacting innumerable victims, before the bloodthirsty beast of absolutism - dangerous still, even as it writhes in its death-throes - is beaten down once and for all. We must make ready for a revolutionary epoch in Russia counted in years, not in days and months, similar to the great French Revolution.

And yet, all lovers of civilization and freedom, that is, the international working class, can rejoice from the bottom of their hearts. The cause of freedom has now been won in Russia; the cause of international reaction has now, on January 22nd, on the streets of Petersburg, had its bloody Jena. For on this day the Russian proletariat burst on the political stage as a class for the first time; for the first time the only power which historically is qualified and able to cast Tsarism into the dustbin and to raise the banner of civilization in Russia and everywhere has appeared on the scene of action. The guerrilla war against absolute power in Russia has lasted for almost a century. As early in 1825, there was a revolt in Petersburg instigated by the sons of the highest of aristocracy, by officers attempting to shake off the chains of despotism. The monuments to this abortive and cruelly suppressed rising can still be found in the snowfields of Siberia, where dozens of the noblest victims were buried for all eternity. Secret conspiratorial societies and attempted assassinations increased during the 1850s, but again 'order' and terror triumphed over the band of desperate fighters. During the 1870s, a strong party of the revolutionary intelligentsia was formed which aspired, with

the support of the peasant masses, to bring about a political revolution by means of systematic, terroristic assassination attempts on the Tsar. It soon became apparent, however, that the peasant masses of the time were an inert element and quite unsuitable for revolutionary movements. Similarly, the assassination of the Tsar proved to be a quite powerless weapon for doing away with Tsarism as a ruling system.

Following the defeat of the terrorist movement in Russia in the 1880s, both Russian society and the lovers of freedom in Western Europe were seized by a profound defeatism. The ice-block of absolutism appeared to be unmovable and the social condition of Russia seemed hopeless. And yet precisely at this moment in Russia was born the movement whose result was to be January 22nd of this year; that moment was - Social Democracy.

From the 1860s and following its serious defeat in the Crimean war, Russian Tsarism made a desperate attempt to transplant Western European capitalism into Russia. The bankrupt absolute regime, for fiscal and military purposes, needed railways and telegraphs, iron and coal, machines, cotton and cloth. The absolute regime nurtured capitalism by all the methods of pillaging the people and by the most ruthless policy of protective tariff - and this unconsciously dug its own grave. It lovingly nursed the exploiting capitalist class - and thus produced a proletariat outraged at exploitation and suppression.

The role for which the peasantry had proved itself incapable became the historical task of the urban, industrial working class in Russia, and this class became the pillar of the movement for freedom and revolution. The untiring underground work of enlightenment performed by Russian



Social Democracy brought about in a few years what a century of the most valiant revolts by the intelligentsia could not, namely the shaking of the foundations of the old stronghold of despotism.

All the oppositional and revolutionary forces in Russian society can now make themselves felt: the elementary, confused outrage of the peasant, the liberal dissatisfaction of the progressive nobility, the thrust towards freedom of the educated intelligentsia, of the professors, man of letters and lawyers. Based on the revolutionary mass movement of the urban proletariat, and marching along behind it, they can all lead a great army of fighting people, one people, against Tsarism. But the power and the future of the revolutionary movement lies entirely and exclusively in the class-conscious Russian proletariat, since only they know what it is to sacrifice their lives by the thousand on the battlefield of freedom. And though at first the leaders of the rising might be chosen fortuitously, though the rising might be clouded outwardly by all kinds of illusions and traditions - it is reality the results of the enormous amount of political enlightenment which has been propagated invisibly among the Russian working class in the past two years by Social-Democratic agitation.

In Russia, as in the whole world, the cause of freedom and social progress now lies with the class-conscious proletariat. It is in very good hands!

## **LENINISM OR MARXISM?**

**ROSA LUXEMBURG**

### **I**

An unprecedented task in the history of the socialist movement has fallen to the lot of the Russian Social Democracy. It is the task of deciding on what is the best socialist tactical policy in a country where absolute monarchy is still dominant. It is a mistake to draw a rigid parallel between the present Russian situation and that which existed in Germany during the years 1879-90, when Bismarck's antisocialist laws were in force. The two have one thing in common -- police rule. Otherwise they are in no way comparable.

The obstacles offered to the socialist movement by the absence of democratic liberties are of relatively secondary importance. Even in Russia, the people's movement has succeeded in overcoming the barriers set up by the state. The people have found themselves a "constitution" (though a rather precarious one) in street disorders. Persevering in this course, the Russian people will in time attain complete victory over the autocracy.

The principal difficulty faced by socialist activity in Russia results from the fact that in that country the domination of the bourgeoisie is veiled by absolutist force. This gives socialist propaganda an abstract character, while immediate political agitation takes on a democratic-revolutionary guise.

Bismarck's antisocialist laws put our movement out of constitutional bounds in a highly developed bourgeois society, where class antagonisms had already reached their full bloom in parliamentary contests. (Here, by the way, lay the absurdity of Bismarck's scheme). The situation is quite different in Russia. The problem there is how to create a Social Democratic movement at a time when the state is not yet in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

The circumstance has an influence on agitation, on the manner of transplanting socialist doctrine to Russian soil. It also bears in a peculiar and direct way on the question of party organization.

Under ordinary conditions -- that is, where the political domination of the bourgeoisie has preceded the socialist movement -- the bourgeoisie itself instills in the working class the rudiments of political solidarity. At this stage, declares the Communist Manifesto, the unification of the workers is not yet the result of their own aspiration to unity but comes as a result of the activity of the bourgeoisie, "which, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the proletariat in motion..."

In Russia, however, the Social Democracy must make up by its own efforts an entire historic period. It must lead the Russian proletarians from their present "atomized" condition, which prolongs the autocratic regime, to a class organization that would help them to become aware of their historic objectives and prepare them to struggle to achieve those objectives.

The Russian socialists are obliged to undertake the building of such an organization without the benefit of such an organization without the benefit of the formal guarantees

commonly found under a bourgeois-democratic setup. They do not dispose of the political raw material that in other countries is supplied by bourgeois society itself. Like God Almighty they must have this organization arise out of the void, so to speak.

How to effect a transition from the type of organization characteristic of the preparatory stage of the socialist movement -- usually featured by disconnected local groups and clubs, with propaganda as a principal activity -- to the unity of a large, national body, suitable for concerted political action over the entire vast territory ruled by the Russian state? That is the specific problem which the Russian Social Democracy has mulled over for some time.

Autonomy and isolation are the most pronounced characteristics of the old organizational type. It is, therefore, understandable why the slogan of persons who want to see an inclusive national organization should be "Centralism!"

At the Party Congress, it became evident that the term "centralism" does not completely cover the question of organization for the Russian Social Democracy. Once again we have learned that no rigid formula can furnish the solution of any problem in the social movement.

One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward, written by Lenin, an outstanding member of the Iskra group, is a methodical exposition of the ideas of the ultra-centralist tendency in the Russian movement. The viewpoint presented with incomparable vigor and logic in this book, is that of pitiless centralism. Laid down as principles are: 1. The necessity of selecting, and constituting as a separate corps, all the active

revolutionists, as distinguished from the unorganized, though revolutionary, mass surrounding this elite.

Lenin's thesis is that the party Central Committee should have the privilege of naming all the local committees of the party. It should have the right to appoint the effective organs of all local bodies from Geneva to Liege, from Tomsk to Irkutsk. It should also have the right to impose on all of them its own ready-made rules of party conduct. It should have the right to rule without appeal on such questions as the dissolution and reconstitution of local organizations. This way, the Central Committee could determine, to suit itself, the composition of the highest party organs. The Central Committee would be the only thinking element in the party. All other groupings would be its executive limbs.

Lenin reasons that the combination of the socialist mass movement with such a rigorously centralized type of organization is a specific principle of revolutionary Marxism. To support this thesis, he advances a series of arguments, with which we shall deal below.

Generally speaking it is undeniable that a strong tendency toward centralization is inherent in the Social Democratic movement. This tendency springs from the economic makeup of capitalism which is essentially a centralizing factor. The Social Democratic movement carries on its activity inside the large bourgeois city. Its mission is to represent, within the boundaries of the national state, the class interests of the proletariat, and to oppose those common interests to all local and group interests.

Therefore, the Social Democracy is, as a rule, hostile to any manifestation of localism or federalism. It strives to unite

all workers and all worker organizations in a single party, no matter what national, religious, or occupational differences may exist among them. The Social Democracy abandons this principle and gives way to federalism only under exceptional conditions, as in the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

It is clear that the Russian Social Democracy should not organize itself as a federative conglomerate of many national groups. It must rather become a single party for the entire empire. However, that is not really the question considered here. What we are considering is the degree of centralization necessary inside the unified, single Russian party in view of the peculiar conditions under which it has to function.

Looking at the matter from the angle of the formal tasks of the Social Democracy, in its capacity as a party of class struggle, it appears at first that the power and energy of the party are directly dependent on the possibility of centralizing the party. However, these formal tasks apply to all active parties. In the case of the Social Democracy, they are less important than is the influence of historic conditions.

The Social Democratic movement is the first in the history of class societies which reckons, in all its phases and through its entire course, on the organization and the direct, independent action of the masses.

Because of this, the Social Democracy creates an organizational type that is entirely different from those common to earlier revolutionary movements, such as those of the Jacobins and the adherents of Blanqui.

Lenin seems to slight this fact when he presents in his book (page 140) the opinion that the revolutionary Social Democrat is nothing else than a "Jacobin indissolubly joined to the organization of the proletariat, which has become conscious of its class interests."

For Lenin, the difference between the Social Democracy and Blanquism is reduced to the observation that in place of a handful of conspirators we have a class-conscious proletariat. He forgets that this difference implies a complete revision of our ideas on organization and, therefore, an entirely different conception of centralism and the relations existing between the party and the struggle itself.

Blanquism did not count on the direct action of the working class. It, therefore, did not need to organize the people for the revolution. The people were expected to play their part only at the moment of revolution. Preparation for the revolution concerned only the little group of revolutionists armed for the coup. Indeed, to assure the success of the revolutionary conspiracy, it was considered wiser to keep the mass at some distance from the conspirators. Such a relationship could be conceived by the Blanquists only because there was no close contact between the conspiratorial activity of their organization and the daily struggle of the popular masses.

The tactics and concrete tasks of the Blanquist revolutionists had little connection with the elementary class struggle. They were freely improvised. They could, therefore, be decided on in advance and took the form of a ready-made plan. In consequence of this, ordinary members of the organization became simple executive organs, carrying out the orders of a will fixed beforehand, and

outside of their particular sphere of activity. They became the instruments of a Central Committee. Here we have the second peculiarity of conspiratorial centralism -- the absolute and blind submission of the party sections to the will of the center, and the extension of this authority to all parts of the organization.

However, Social Democratic activity is carried on under radically different conditions. It arises historically out of the elementary class struggle. It spreads and develops in accordance with the following dialectical contradiction. The proletarian army is recruited and becomes aware of its objectives in the course of the struggle itself. The activity of the party organization, the growth of the proletarians' awareness of the objectives of the struggle and the struggle itself, are not different things separated chronologically and mechanically. They are only different aspects of the same struggle, there do not exist for the Social Democracy detailed sets of tactics which a Central Committee can teach the party membership in the same way as troops are instructed in their training camps. Furthermore, the range of influence of the socialist party is constantly fluctuating with the ups and downs of the struggle in the course of which the organization is created and grows.

For this reason Social Democratic centralism cannot be based on the mechanical subordination and blind obedience of the party membership to the leading party center. For this reason, the Social Democratic movement cannot allow the erection of an air-tight partition between the class-conscious nucleus of the proletariat already in the party and its immediate popular environment, the nonparty sections of the proletariat.



Now the two principles on which Lenin's centralism rests are precisely these:

1. The blind subordination, in the smallest detail, of all party organs to the party center which alone thinks, guides, and decides for all.
2. The rigorous separation of the organized nucleus of revolutionaries from its social-revolutionary surroundings.

Such centralism is a mechanical transposition of the organizational principles of Blanquism into the mass movement of the socialist working class.

In accordance with this view, Lenin defines his "revolutionary Social Democrat" as a "Jacobin joined to the organization of the proletariat, which has become conscious of its class interests."

The fact is that the Social Democracy is not joined to the organization of the proletariat. It is itself the proletariat. And because of this, Social Democratic centralism is essentially different from Blanquist centralism. It can only be the concentrated will of the individuals and groups representative of the working class. It is, so to speak, the "self-centralism" of the advanced sectors of the proletariat. It is the rule of the majority within its own party.

The indispensable conditions for the realization of Social Democratic centralism are:

1. The existence of a large contingent of workers educated in the class struggle.

2. The possibility for the workers to develop their own political activity through direct influence on public life, in a party press, and public congresses, etc.

These conditions are not yet fully formed in Russia. The first -- a proletarian vanguard, conscious of its class interests and capable of self-direction in political activity -- is only now emerging in Russia. All efforts of socialist agitation and organization should aim to hasten the formation of such a vanguard. The second condition can be had only under a regime of political liberty.

With these conclusions, Lenin disagrees violently. He is convinced that all the conditions necessary for the formation of a powerful and centralized party already exist in Russia. He declares that, "it is no longer the proletarians but certain intellectuals in our party who need to be educated in the matters of organization and discipline," (page 145). He glorifies the educative influence of the factory, which, he says, accustoms the proletariat to "discipline and organization," (page 147).

Saying all this, Lenin seems to demonstrate again that his conception of socialist organization is quite mechanistic. The discipline Lenin has in mind is being implanted in the working class not only by the factory but also by the military and the existing state bureaucracy -- by the entire mechanism of the centralized bourgeois state.

We misuse words and we practice self-deception when we apply the same term -- discipline -- to such dissimilar notions as: 1, the absence of thought and will in a body with a thousand automatically moving hands and legs, and 2, the spontaneous coordination of the conscious, political acts of a body of men. What is there in common between the

regulated docility of an oppressed class and the self-discipline and organization of a class struggling for its emancipation?

The self-discipline of the Social Democracy is not merely the replacement of the authority of bourgeois rulers with the authority of a socialist central committee. The working class will acquire the sense of the new discipline, the freely assumed self-discipline of the Social Democracy, not as a result of the discipline imposed on it by the capitalist state, but by extirpating, to the last root, its old habits of obedience and servility.

Centralism in the socialist sense is not an absolute thing applicable to any phase whatsoever of the labor movement. It is a tendency, which becomes real in proportion to the development and political training acquired by the working masses in the course of their struggle.

No doubt, the absence of the conditions necessary for the complete realization of this kind of centralism in the Russian movement presents a formidable obstacle.

It is a mistake to believe that it is possible to substitute "provisionally" the absolute power of a Central Committee (acting somehow by "tacit delegation") for the yet unrealizable rule of the majority of conscious workers in the party, and in this way replace the open control of the working masses over the party organs with the reverse control by the Central Committee over the revolutionary proletariat.

The history of the Russian labor movement suggests the doubtful value of such centralism. An all-powerful center, invested, as Lenin would have it, with the unlimited right to

control and intervene, would be an absurdity if its authority applied only to technical questions, such as the administration of funds, the distribution of tasks among propagandists and agitators, the transportation and circulation of printed matter. The political purpose of an organ having such great powers only if those powers apply to the elaboration of a uniform plan of action, if the central organ assumes the initiative of a vast revolutionary act.

But what has been the experience of the Russian socialist movement up to now? The most important and fruitful changes in its tactical policy during the last ten years have not been the inventions of several leaders and even less so of any central organizational organs. They have always been the spontaneous product of the movement in ferment. This was true during the first stage of the proletarian movement in Russia, which began with the spontaneous general strike of St. Petersburg in 1896, an event that marks the inception of an epoch of economic struggle by the Russian working people. It was no less true during the following period, introduced by the spontaneous street demonstrations of St. Petersburg students in March, 1901. The general strike of Rostov-on-Don, in 1903, marking the next great tactical turn in the Russian proletarian movement, was also a spontaneous act. "All by itself," the strike expanded into political demonstrations, street agitation, great outdoor meetings, which the most optimistic revolutionist would not have dreamed of several years before.

Our cause made great gains in these events. However, the initiative and conscious leadership of the Social Democratic organizations played an insignificant role in this development. It is true that these organizations were not specifically prepared for such happenings. However, the

unimportant part played by the revolutionists cannot be explained by this fact. Neither can it be attributed to the absence of an all-powerful central party apparatus similar to what is asked for by Lenin. The existence of such a guiding center would have probably increased the disorder of the local committees by emphasizing the difference between the eager attack of the mass and the prudent position of the Social Democracy. The same phenomenon -- the insignificant part played by the initiative of central party organs in the elaboration of actual tactical policy -- can be observed today in Germany and other countries. In general, the tactical policy of the Social Democracy is not something that may be "invented." It is the product of a series of great creative acts of the often spontaneous class struggle seeking its way forward.

The unconscious comes before the conscious. The logic of the historic process comes before the subjective logic of the human beings who participate in the historic process. The tendency is for the directing organs of the socialist party to play a conservative role. Experience shows that every time the labor movement wins new terrain those organs work it to the utmost. They transform it at the same time into a kind of bastion, which holds up advance on a wider scale.

The present tactical policy of the German Social Democracy has won universal esteem because it is supple as well as firm. This is a sign of the fine adaptation of the party, in the smallest detail of its everyday activity, to the conditions of a parliamentary regime. The party has made a methodical study of all the resources of this terrain. It knows how to utilize them without modifying its principles.

However, the very perfection of this adaptation is already closing vaster horizons to our party. There is a tendency in

the party to regard parliamentary tactics as the immutable and specific tactics of socialist activity. People refuse, for example, to consider the possibility (posed by Parvus) of changing our tactical policy in case general suffrage is abolished in Germany, an eventuality not considered entirely improbable by the German Social Democracy.

Such inertia is due, in a large degree, to the fact that it is very inconvenient to define, within the vacuum of abstract hypotheses, the lines and forms of still nonexistent political situations. Evidently, the important thing for the Social Democracy is not the preparation of a set of directives all ready for future policy. It is important: 1, to encourage a correct historic appreciation of the forms of struggle corresponding to the given situations, and 2, to maintain an understanding of the relativity of the current phase and the inevitable increase of revolutionary tension as the final goal of class struggle is approached.

Granting, as Lenin wants, such absolute powers of a negative character to the top organ of the party, we strengthen, to a dangerous extent, the conservatism inherent in such an organ. If the tactics of the socialist party are not to be the creation of a Central Committee but of the whole party, or, still better, of the whole labor movement, then it is clear that the party sections and federations need the liberty of action which alone will permit them to develop their revolutionary initiative and to utilize all the resources of the situation. The ultra-centralism asked by Lenin is full of the sterile spirit of the overseer. It is not a positive and creative spirit. Lenin's concern is not so much to make the activity of the party more fruitful as to control the party -- to narrow the movement rather than to develop it, to bind rather than to unify it.

In the present situation, such an experiment would be doubly dangerous to the Russian Social Democracy. It stands on the eve of decisive battles against tsarism. It is about to enter, or has already entered, on a period of intensified creative activity, during which it will broaden (as is usual in a revolutionary period) its sphere of influence and will advance spontaneously by leaps and bounds. To attempt to bind the initiative of the party at this moment, to surround it with a network of barbed wire, is to render it incapable of accomplishing the tremendous task of the hour.

The general ideas we have presented on the question of socialist centralism are not by themselves sufficient for the formulation of a constitutional plan suiting the Russian party. In the final instance, a statute of this kind can only be determined by the conditions under which the activity of the organization takes place in a given epoch. The question of the moment in Russia is how to set in motion a large proletarian organization. No constitutional project can claim infallibility. It must prove itself in fire.

But from our general conception of the nature of Social Democratic organization, we feel justified in deducing that its spirit requires -- especially at the inception of the mass party -- the co-ordination and unification of the movement and not its rigid submission to a set of regulations. If the party possesses the gift of political mobility, complemented by unflinching loyalty to principles and concern for unity, we can rest assured that any defects in the party constitution will be corrected in practice. For us, it is not the letter, but the living spirit carried into the organization by the membership that decides the value of this or that organizational form.

## II

So far we have examined the problem of centralism from the viewpoint of the general principles of the Social Democracy, and to some extent, in the light of conditions peculiar to Russia. However, the military ultra-centralism cried up by Lenin and his friends is not the product of accidental differences of opinion. It is said to be related to a campaign against opportunism which Lenin has carried to the smallest organizational detail.

"It is important," says Lenin (page 52), "to forge a more or less effective weapon against opportunism." He believes that opportunism springs specifically from the characteristic leaning of intellectuals to decentralization and disorganization, from their aversion for strict discipline and "bureaucracy," which is, however, necessary for the functioning of the party.

Lenin says that intellectuals remain individualists and tend to anarchism even after they have joined the socialist movement. According to him, it is only among intellectuals that we can note a repugnance for the absolute authority of a Central Committee. The authentic proletarian, Lenin suggests, finds by reason of his class instinct a kind of voluptuous pleasure in abandoning himself to the clutch of firm leadership and pitiless discipline. "To oppose bureaucracy to democracy," writes Lenin, "is to contrast the organizational principle of revolutionary Social Democracy to the methods of opportunistic organization," (page 151).

He declares that a similar conflict between centralizing and autonomist tendencies is taking place in all countries where



reformism and revolutionary socialism meet face to face. He points in particular to the recent controversy in the German Social Democracy on the question of the degree of freedom of action to be allowed by the Party to socialist representatives in legislative assemblies.

Let us examine the parallels drawn by Lenin.

First, it is important to point out that the glorification of the supposed genius of proletarians in the matter of socialist organization and a general distrust of intellectuals as such are not necessarily signs of "revolutionary Marxist" mentality. It is very easy to demonstrate that such arguments are themselves an expression of opportunism.

Antagonism between purely proletarian elements and the nonproletarian intellectuals in the labor movement is raised as an ideological issue by the following trends: the semianarchism of the French syndicalists, whose watchword is "Beware of the politician!"; English trade-unionism, full of mistrust of the "socialist visionaries"; and, if our information is correct, the "pure economism," represented a short while ago within the Russian Social Democracy by Rabochaya Mysl ("Labor Thought"), which was printed secretly in St. Petersburg.

In most socialist parties in Western Europe there is undoubtedly a connection between opportunism and the "intellectuals," as well as between opportunism and decentralizing tendencies within the labor movement.

But nothing is more contrary to the historic-dialectic method of Marxist thought than to separate social phenomena from their historic soil and to present these

phenomena as abstract formulas having an absolute, general application.

Reasoning abstractly, we may say that the "intellectual," a social element which has emerged out of the bourgeoisie and is therefore alien to the proletariat, enters the socialist movement not because of his natural class inclinations but in spite of them. For this reason, he is more liable to opportunist aberrations than the proletarian. The latter, we say, can be expected to find a definite revolutionary point of support in his class interests as long as he does not leave his original environment, the laboring mass. But the concrete form assumed by this inclination of the intellectual toward opportunism and, above all, the manner in which this tendency expresses itself in organizational questions depend every time on his given social milieu.

Bourgeois parliamentarism is the definite social base of the phenomenon observed by Lenin in the German, French, and Italian socialist movements. This parliamentarism is the breeding place of all opportunist tendencies now existing in Western Social Democracy.

The kind of parliamentarism we now have in France, Italy, and Germany provides the soil for such illusions of current opportunism as overvaluation of social reforms, class and party collaboration, the hope of pacific development towards socialism etc. It does so by placing intellectuals, acting in the capacity of parliamentarians, above the proletariat and by separating intellectuals from proletarians inside the socialist movement itself. With the growth of the labor movement, parliamentarism becomes a springboard for political careerists. That is why so many ambitious failures from the bourgeoisie flock to the banners of socialist parties. Another source of contemporary

opportunism is the considerable material means and influence of the large Social Democratic organizations.

The party acts as a bulwark protecting the class movement against digressions in the direction of more bourgeois parliamentarism. To triumph, these tendencies must destroy the bulwark. They must dissolve the active, class-conscious sector of the proletariat in the amorphous mass of an "electorate."

That is how the "autonomist" and decentralizing tendencies arise in our Social Democratic parties. We notice that these tendencies suit definite political ends. They cannot be explained, as Lenin attempts, by referring to the intellectual's psychology, to his supposedly innate instability of character. They can only be explained by considering the needs of the bourgeois parliamentary politician, that is, by opportunist politics.

The situation is quite different in tsarist Russia. Opportunism in the Russian labor movement is, generally speaking, not the by-product of Social Democratic strength or of the decomposition of the bourgeoisie. It is the product of the backward political condition of Russian society.

The milieu where intellectuals are recruited for socialism in Russia is much more declassed and by far less bourgeois than in Western Europe. Added to the immaturity of the Russian proletarian movement, this circumstance is an influence for wide theoretic wandering, which ranges from the complete negation of the political aspect of the labor movement to the unqualified belief in the effectiveness of isolated terrorist acts, or even total political indifference sought in the swamps of liberalism and Kantian idealism.

However, the intellectual within the Russian Social Democratic movement can only be attracted to an act of disorganization. It is contrary to the general outlook of the Russian intellectual's milieu. There is no bourgeois parliament in Russia to favor this tendency.

The Western intellectual who professes at this moment the "cult of the ego" and colors even his socialist yearnings with an aristocratic morale, is not the representative of the bourgeois intelligentsia "in general." He represents only a certain phase of social development. He is the product of bourgeois decadence.

The Narodniki ("Populists") of 1875 called on the Russian intelligentsia to lose themselves in the peasant mass. The ultra-civilized followers of Tolstoi speak today of escape to the life of the "simple folk." Similarly, the partisans of "pure economism" in the Russian Social Democracy want us to bow down before the "calloused hand" of labor.

If instead of mechanically applying to Russia formulae elaborated in Western Europe, we approach the problem of organization from the angle of conditions specific to Russia, we arrive at conclusions that are diametrically opposed to Lenin's.

To attribute to opportunism an invariable preference for a definite form of organization, that is, decentralization, is to miss the essence of opportunism.

On the question of organization, or any other question, opportunism knows only one principle: the absence of principle. Opportunism chooses its means of action with the aim of suiting the given circumstances at hand, provided these means appear to lead toward the ends in view.

If, like Lenin, we define opportunism as the tendency that paralyzes the independent revolutionary movement of the working class and transforms it into an instrument of ambitious bourgeois intellectuals, we must also recognize that in the initial stage of a labor movement this end is more easily attained as a result of rigorous centralization rather than by decentralization. It is by extreme centralization that a young, uneducated proletarian movement can be most completely handed over to the intellectual leaders staffing a Central Committee.

Also in Germany, at the start of the Social Democratic movement, and before the emergence of a solid nucleus of conscious proletarians and a tactical policy based on experience, partisans of the two opposite types of organization faced each other in argument. The "General Association of German Workers," founded by Lasalle, stood for extreme centralization. [Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeiterverein, organized on May 23, 1863 -- Ed] The principle of autonomism was supported by the party which was organized at the Eisenach Congress with the collaboration of W. Liebknecht and A. Bebel.

The tactical policy of the "Eisenachers" was quite confused. Yet they contributed vastly more to the awakening of class-consciousness of the German masses than the Lassalleans. Very early the workers played a preponderant role in that party (as was demonstrated by the number of worker publications in the provinces), and there was a rapid extension of the range of the movement. At the same time, the Lassalleans, in spite of all their experiments with "dictators," led their faithful from one misadventure to another.

In general, it is rigorous, despotic centralism that is preferred by opportunist intellectuals at a time when the revolutionary elements among the workers still lack cohesion and the movement is groping its way, as is the case now in Russia. In a later phase, under a parliamentary regime and in connection with a strong labor party, the opportunist tendencies of the intellectuals express themselves in an inclination toward "decentralization."

If we assume the viewpoint claimed as his own by Lenin and we fear the influence of intellectuals in the proletarian movement, we can conceive of no greater danger to the Russian party than Lenin's plan of organization. Nothing will more surely enslave a young labor movement to an intellectual elite hungry for power than this bureaucratic straightjacket, which will immobilize the movement and turn it into an automaton manipulated by a Central Committee. On the other hand there is no more effective guarantee against opportunist intrigue and personal ambition than the independent revolutionary action of the proletariat, as a result of which the workers acquire the sense of political responsibility and self-reliance.

What is today only a phantom haunting Lenin's imagination may become reality tomorrow.

Let us not forget that the revolution soon to break out in Russia will be a bourgeois and not a proletarian revolution. This modifies radically all the conditions of socialist struggle. The Russian intellectuals, too, will rapidly become imbued with bourgeois ideology. The Social Democracy is at present the only guide of the Russian proletariat. But on the day after the revolution, we shall see the bourgeoisie and above all the bourgeois masses as a steppingstone to their domination.

The game of bourgeois demagogues will be made easier if at the present stage, the spontaneous action, initiative, and political sense of the advanced sections of the working class are hindered in their development and restricted by the protectorate of an authoritarian Central Committee.

More important is the fundamental falseness of the idea underlying the plan of unqualified centralism -- the idea that the road to opportunism can be barred by means of clauses in the party constitution.

Impressed by recent happenings in the socialist parties of France, Italy, and Germany, the Russian Social Democrats tend to regard opportunism as an alien ingredient, brought into the labor movement by representatives of bourgeois democracy. If that were so, no penalties provided by a party constitution could stop this intrusion. This afflux of nonproletarian recruits to the party of the proletariat is the effect of profound social causes, such as the economic collapse of the petty bourgeoisie, the bankruptcy of bourgeois liberalism, and the degeneration of bourgeois democracy. It is naïve to hope to stop this current by means of a formula written down in a constitution.

A manual of regulations may master the life of a small sect or a private circle. An historic current, however, will pass through the mesh of the most subtly worded paragraph. It is furthermore untrue that to repel the elements pushed toward the socialist movement by the decomposition of bourgeois society means to defend the interests of the working class. The Social Democracy has always contended that it represents not only the class interests of the proletariat but also the progressive aspirations of the whole of contemporary society. It represents the interests of all who

are oppressed by bourgeois domination. This must not be understood merely in the sense that all these interests are ideally contained in the socialist program. Historic evolution translates the given proposition into reality. In its capacity as a political party, the Social Democracy becomes the haven of all discontented elements in our society and thus of the entire people, as contrasted to the tiny minority of capitalist masters.

But socialists must always know how to subordinate the anguish, rancor, and hope of this motley aggregation to the supreme goal of the working class. The Social Democracy must enclose the tumult of the nonproletarian protestants against existing society within bounds of the revolutionary action of the proletariat. It must assimilate the elements that come to it.

This is only possible if the Social Democracy already contains a strong, politically educated proletarian nucleus class conscious enough to be able, as up to now in Germany, to pull along in its tow the declassed and petty bourgeois elements that join the party. In that case, greater strictness in the application of the principle of centralization and more severe discipline, specifically formulated in party bylaws, may be an effective safeguard against the opportunist danger. That is how the revolutionary socialist movement in France defended itself against the Jauresist confusion. A modification of the constitution at the German Social Democracy in that direction would be a very timely measure.

But even here we should not think of the party constitution as a weapon that is, somehow, self-sufficient. It can be at most a coercive instrument enforcing the will of the



proletarian majority in the party. If this majority is lacking, then the most dire sanctions on paper will be of no avail.

However, the influx of bourgeois elements into the party is far from being the only cause of the opportunist trends that are now raising their heads in the Social Democracy. Another cause is the very nature of socialist activity and the contradictions inherent in it.

The international movement of the proletariat toward its complete emancipation is a process peculiar in the following respect. For the first time in the history of civilization, the people are expressing their will consciously and in opposition to all ruling classes. But this will can only be satisfied beyond the limits of the existing system.

Now the mass can only acquire and strengthen this will in the course of day-to-day struggle against the existing social order -- that is, within the limits of capitalist society.

On the one hand, we have the mass; on the other, its historic goal, located outside of existing society. On one hand, we have the day-to-day struggle; on the other, the social revolution. Such are the terms of the dialectic contradiction through which the socialist movement makes its way.

It follows that this movement can best advance by tacking betwixt and between the two dangers by which it is constantly being threatened. One is the loss of its mass character; the other, the abandonment of its goal. One is the danger of sinking back to the condition of a sect; the other, the danger of becoming a movement of bourgeois social reform.

That is why it is illusory, and contrary to historic experience, to hope to fix, once and for always, the direction of the revolutionary socialist struggle with the aid of formal means, which are expected to secure the labor movement against all possibilities of opportunist digression.

Marxist theory offers us a reliable instrument enabling us to recognize and combat typical manifestations of opportunism. But the socialist movement is a mass movement. Its perils are not the product of the insidious machinations of individuals and groups. They arise out of unavoidable social conditions. We cannot secure ourselves in advance against all possibilities of opportunist deviation. Such dangers can be overcome only by the movement itself -- certainly with the aid of Marxist theory, but only after the dangers in question have taken tangible form in practice.

Looked at from this angle, opportunism appears to be a product and an inevitable phase of the historic development of the labor movement.

The Russian Social Democracy arose a short while ago. The political conditions under which the proletarian movement is developing in Russia are quite abnormal. In that country, opportunism is to a large extent a by-product of the groping and experimentation of socialist activity seeking to advance over a terrain that resembles no other in Europe.

In view of this, we find most astonishing the claim that it is possible to avoid any possibility of opportunism in the Russian movement by writing down certain words, instead of others, in the party constitution. Such an attempt to exercise opportunism by means of a scrap of paper may

turn out to be extremely harmful -- not to opportunism but to the socialist movement.

Stop the natural pulsation of a living organism, and you weaken it, and you diminish its resistance and combative spirit -- in this instance, not only against opportunism but also (and that is certainly of great importance) against the existing social order. The proposed means turn against the end they are supposed to serve.

In Lenin's overanxious desire to establish the guardianship of an omniscient and omnipotent Central Committee in order to protect so promising and vigorous a labor movement against any misstep, we recognize the symptoms of the same subjectivism that has already played more than one trick on socialist thinking in Russia.

It is amusing to note the strange somersaults that the respectable human "ego" has had to perform in recent Russian history. Knocked to the ground, almost reduced to dust, by Russian absolutism, the "ego" takes revenge by turning to revolutionary activity. In the shape of a committee of conspirators, in the name of a nonexistent Will of the People, it seats itself on a kind of throne and proclaims it is all-powerful. [The reference is to the conspiratorial circle which attacked tsarism from 1879 to 1883 by means of terrorist acts and finally assassinated Alexander II. -- Ed] But the "object" proves to be the stronger. The knout is triumphant, for tsarist might seems to be the "legitimate" expression of history.

In time we see appear on the scene and even more "legitimate" child of history -- the Russian labor movement. For the first time, bases for the formation of a real "people's will" are laid in Russian soil.

But here is the "ego" of the Russian revolutionary again! Pirouetting on its head, it once more proclaims itself to be the all-powerful director of history -- this time with the title of His Excellency the Central Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Russia.

The nimble acrobat fails to perceive that the only "subject" which merits today the role of director is the collective "ego" of the working class. The working class demands the right to make its mistakes and learn the dialectic of history.

Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee.

# **THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**

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## FUNDAMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Russian Revolution is the mightiest event of the World War. Its outbreak, its unexampled radicalism, its enduring consequences, constitute the clearest condemnation of the lying phrases which official Social-Democracy so zealously supplied at the beginning of the war as an ideological cover for German imperialism's campaign of conquest. I refer to the phrases concerning the mission of German bayonets, which were to overthrow Russian Czarism and free its oppressed peoples.

The mighty sweep of the revolution in Russia, the profound results which have transformed all class relationships, raised all social and economic problems, and, with the fatality of their own inner logic developed consistently from the first phase of the bourgeois republic to ever more advanced stages, finally reducing the fall of Czarism to the status of a mere minor episode -- all these things show as plain as day that the freeing of Russia was not an achievement of the war and the military defeat of Czarism, not some service of "German bayonets in German fists," as the *Neue Zeit* under Kautsky's editorship once promised in an editorial. They show, on the contrary, that the freeing of Russia had its roots deep in the soil of its own land and was fully matured internally. The military adventure of German imperialism under the ideological blessing of German Social-Democracy did not bring about the revolution in Russia but only served to interrupt it at first, to postpone it for a while after its first stormy rising tide in the years 1911-13, and then, after its outbreak, created for it the most difficult and abnormal conditions.

Moreover, for every thinking observer, these developments are a decisive refutation of the doctrinaire theory which Kautsky shared with the Government Social-Democrats [1], according to which Russia, as an economically backward and predominantly agrarian land, was supposed not to be ripe for social revolution and proletarian dictatorship. This theory, which regards only a bourgeois revolution as feasible in Russia, is also the theory of the opportunist wing of the Russian labor movement, of the so-called Mensheviks, under the experienced leadership of Axelrod and Dan. And from this conception follow the tactics of the coalition of socialists in Russia with bourgeois liberalism. On this basic conception of the Russian Revolution, from which follow automatically their detailed positions on questions of tactics, both the Russian and the German opportunists find themselves in agreement with the German Government Socialists. According to the opinion of all three, the Russian Revolution should have called a halt at the stage which German imperialism in its conduct of the war had set as its noble task, according to the mythology of the German Social-Democracy, i.e., it should have stopped with the overthrow of Czarism. According to this view, if the revolution has gone beyond that point and has set as its task the dictatorship of the proletariat, this is simply a mistake of the radical wing of the Russian labor movement, the Bolsheviks. And all difficulties which the revolution has met with in its further course, and all disorders it has suffered are pictured as purely a result of this fateful error.

Theoretically, this doctrine (recommended as the fruit of "Marxist thinking" by the Vorwarts of Stampfer and by Kautsky alike) follows from the original "Marxist"

discovery that the socialist revolution is a national and, so to speak, a domestic affair in each modern country taken by itself. Of course, in the blue mists of abstract formulae, a Kautsky knows very well how to trace the world-wide connections of capital which make of all modern countries a single integrated organism. The problems of the Russian Revolution, moreover -- since it is a product of international developments plus the agrarian question -- cannot possibly be solved within the limits of bourgeois society.

Practically, this same doctrine represents an attempt to get rid of any responsibility for the course of the Russian Revolution, so far as that responsibility concerns the international, and especially the German, proletariat, and to deny the international connections of this revolution. It is not Russia's unripeness which has been proved by the events of the war and the Russian Revolution, but the unripeness of the German proletariat for the fulfillment of its historic tasks. And to make this fully clear is the first task of a critical examination of the Russian Revolution.

The fate of the revolution in Russia depended fully upon international events. That the Bolsheviks have based their policy entirely upon the world proletarian revolution is the clearest proof of their political farsightedness and firmness of principle and of the bold scope of their policies. In it is visible the mighty advance which capitalist development has made in the last decade. The revolution of 1905-07 roused only a faint echo in Europe. Therefore, it had to remain a mere opening chapter. Continuation and conclusion were tied up with the further development of Europe.



Clearly, not uncritical apologetics but penetrating and thoughtful criticism is alone capable of bringing out treasures of experiences and teachings. Dealing as we are with the very first experiment in proletarian dictatorship in world history (and one taking place at that under the hardest conceivable conditions, in the midst of the world-wide conflagration and chaos of the imperialist mass slaughter, caught in the coils of the most reactionary military power in Europe, and accompanied by the most complete failure on the part of the international working class), it would be a crazy idea to think that every last thing done or left undone in an experiment with the dictatorship of the proletariat under such abnormal conditions represented the very pinnacle of perfection. On the contrary, elementary conceptions of socialist politics and an insight into their historically necessary prerequisites force us to understand that under such fatal conditions even the most gigantic idealism and the most storm-tested revolutionary energy are incapable of realizing democracy and socialism but only distorted attempts at either.

To make this stand out clearly in all its fundamental aspects and consequences is the elementary duty of the socialists of all countries; for only on the background of this bitter knowledge can we measure the enormous magnitude of the responsibility of the international proletariat itself for the fate of the Russian Revolution. Furthermore, it is only on this basis that the decisive importance of the resolute international action of the proletariat can become effective, without which action as its necessary support, even the greatest energy and the greatest sacrifices of the proletariat in a single country must inevitably become tangled in a maze of contradiction and blunders.

There is no doubt either that the wise heads at the helm of the Russian Revolution, that Lenin and Trotsky on their thorny path beset by traps of all kinds, have taken many a decisive step only with the greatest inner hesitation and with the most violent inner opposition. And surely nothing can be farther from their thoughts than to believe that all the things they have done or left undone under the conditions of bitter compulsion and necessity in the midst of the roaring whirlpool of events, should be regarded by the International as a shining example of socialist polity toward which only uncritical admiration and zealous imitation are in order.

It would be no less wrong to fear that a critical examination of the road so far taken by the Russian Revolution would serve to weaken the respect for and the attractive power of the example of the Russian Revolution, which alone can overcome the fatal inertia of the German masses. Nothing is farther from the truth. An awakening of the revolutionary energy of the working class in Germany can never again be called forth in the spirit of the guardianship methods of the German Social-Democracy of late-lamented memory. It can never again be conjured forth by any spotless authority, be it that of our own "higher committees" or that of "the Russian example." Not by the creation of a revolutionary hurrah-spirit, but quite the contrary: only by an insight into all the fearful seriousness, all the complexity of the tasks involved, only as a result of political maturity and independence of spirit, only as a result of a capacity for critical judgement on the part of the masses, whose capacity was systematically killed by the Social-Democracy for decades under various pretexts, only thus can the genuine capacity for historical

action be born in the German proletariat. To concern one's self with a critical analysis of the Russian Revolution in all its historical connections is the best training for the German and the international working class for the tasks which confront them as an outgrowth of the present situation.

The first period of the Russian Revolution, from its beginning in March to the October Revolution, corresponds exactly in its general outlines to the course of development of both the Great English Revolution and the Great French Revolution. It is the typical course of every first general reckoning of the revolutionary forces begotten within the womb of bourgeois society.

Its development moves naturally in an ascending line: from moderate beginnings to ever-greater radicalization of aims and, parallel with that, from a coalition of classes and parties to the sole rule of the radical party.

At the outset in March 1917, the "Cadets", that is the liberal bourgeoisie, stood at the head of the revolution. The first general rising of the revolutionary tide swept every one and everything along with it. The Fourth Duma, ultra-reactionary product of the ultra-reactionary four-class right of suffrage and arising out of the coup d'état, was suddenly converted into an organ of the revolution. All bourgeois parties, even those of the nationalistic right, suddenly formed a phalanx against absolutism. The latter fell at the first attack almost without a struggle, like an organ that had died and needed only to be touched to drop off. The brief effort, too, of the liberal bourgeoisie to save at least the throne and the dynasty collapsed within a few hours. The sweeping march of events leaped in days and hours over

distances that formerly, in France, took decades to traverse. In this, it became clear that Russia was realizing the result of a century of European development, and above all, that the revolution of 1917 was a direct continuation of that of 1905-07, and not a gift of the German "liberator." The movement of March 1917 linked itself directly onto the point where, ten years earlier, its work had broken off. The democratic republic was the complete, internally ripened product of the very onset of the revolution.

Now, however, began the second and more difficult task. From the very first moment, the driving force of the revolution was the mass of the urban proletariat. However, its demands did not limit themselves to the realization of political democracy but were concerned with the burning question of international policy -- immediate peace. At the same time, the revolution embraced the mass of the army, which raised the same demand for immediate peace, and the mass of the peasants, who pushed the agrarian question into the foreground, that agrarian question which since 1905 had been the very axis of the revolution. Immediate peace and land -- from these two aims the internal split in the revolutionary phalanx followed inevitably. The demand for immediate peace was in most irreconcilable opposition to the imperialist tendencies of the liberal bourgeoisie for whom Milyukov was the spokesman. On the other hand, the land question was a terrifying spectre for the other wing of the bourgeoisie, the rural landowners. And, in addition, it represented an attack on the sacred principle of private property in general, a touchy point for the entire propertied class.

Thus, on the very day after the first victories of the revolution, there began an inner struggle within it over the two burning questions -- peace and land. The liberal bourgeoisie entered upon the tactics of dragging out things and evading them. The laboring masses, the army, the peasantry, pressed forward ever more impetuously. There can be no doubt that with the questions of peace and land, the fate of the political democracy of the republic was linked up. The bourgeois classes, carried away by the first stormy wave of the revolution, had permitted themselves to be dragged along to the point of republican government. Now they began to seek a base of support in the rear and silently to organize a counter-revolution. The Kaledin Cossack campaign against Petersburg was a clear expression of this tendency. Had the attack been successful, then not only the fate of the peace and land questions would have been sealed, but the fate of the republic as well. Military dictatorship, a reign of terror against the proletariat, and then return to monarchy, would have been the inevitable results.

From this we can judge the utopian and fundamentally reactionary characters of the tactics by which the Russian "Kautskyans" or Mensheviks permitted themselves to be guided. Hardened in their addiction to the myth of the bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution -- for the time being, you see, Russia is not supposed to be ripe for the social revolution! -- they clung desperately to a coalition with the bourgeois liberals. But this means a union of elements which had been split by the natural internal development of the revolution and had come into the sharpest conflict with each other. The Axelrods and Dans wanted to collaborate at all costs with those classes and parties from which

came the greatest threat of danger to the revolution and to its first conquest, democracy.

It is especially astonishing to observe how this industrious man (Kautsky), by his tireless labor of peaceful and methodical writing during the four years of the World War, has torn one hole after another in the fabric of socialism. It is a labor from which socialism emerges riddled like a sieve, without a whole spot left in it. The uncritical indifference with which his followers regarded this industrious labor of their official theoretician and swallow each of his new discoveries without so much as batting an eyelash, finds its only counterpart in the indifference with which the followers of Scheidemann and Co. look on while the latter punch socialism full of holes in practice. Indeed, the two labors completely supplement each other. Since the outbreak of the war, Kautsky, the official guardian of the temple of Marxism, has really only been doing in theory the same things which the Scheidemanns have been doing in practice, namely:

the International an instrument of peace;  
disarmament, the League of Nations and nationalism;  
and finally  
democracy not socialism. [2]

In this situation, the Bolshevik tendency performs the historic service of having proclaimed from the very beginning, and having followed with iron consistency, those tactics which alone could save democracy and drive the revolution ahead. All power exclusively in the hands of the worker and peasant masses, in the hands of the soviets -- this was indeed the only way out of the difficulty into which the revolution had gotten; this was

the sword stroke with which they cut the Gordian knot, freed the revolution from a narrow blind-alley and opened up for it an untrammelled path into the free and open fields.

The party of Lenin was thus the only one in Russia which grasped the true interest of the revolution in that first period. It was the element that drove the revolution forward, and, thus it was the only party which really carried on a socialist policy.

It is this which makes clear, too, why it was that the Bolsheviks, though they were at the beginning of the revolution a persecuted, slandered and hunted minority attacked on all sides, arrived within the shortest time to the head of the revolution and were able to bring under their banner all the genuine masses of the people: the urban proletariat, the army, the peasants, as well as the revolutionary elements of democracy, the left wing of the Socialist-Revolutionaries.

The real situation, in which the Russian Revolution found itself, narrowed down in a few months to the alternative: victory of the counter-revolution or dictatorship of the proletariat -- Kaledin or Lenin. Such was the objective situation, just as it quickly presents itself in every revolution after the first intoxication is over, and as it presented itself in Russia as a result of the concrete, burning questions of peace and land, for which there was no solution within the framework of bourgeois revolution.

In this, the Russian Revolution has but confirmed the basic lesson of every great revolution, the law of its being, which decrees: either the revolution must advance

at a rapid, stormy, resolute tempo, break down all barriers with an iron hand and place its goals ever farther ahead, or it is quite soon thrown backward behind its feeble point of departure and suppressed by counter-revolution. To stand still, to mark time on one spot, to be contented with the first goal it happens to reach, is never possible in revolution. And he who tries to apply the home-made wisdom derived from parliamentary battles between frogs and mice to the field of revolutionary tactics only shows thereby that the very psychology and laws of existence of revolution are alien to him and that all historical experience is to him a book sealed with seven seals.

Take the course of the English Revolution from its onset in 1642. There the logic of things made it necessary that the first feeble vacillations of the Presbyterians, whose leaders deliberately evaded a decisive battle with Charles I and victory over him, should inevitably be replaced by the Independents, who drove them out of Parliament and seized the power for themselves. And in the same way, within the army of the Independents, the lower petty-bourgeois mass of the soldiers, the Lilburnian "Levellers" constituted the driving force of the entire Independent movement; just as, finally, the proletarian elements within the mass of the soldiers, the elements that went farthest in their aspirations for social revolution and who found their expression in the Digger movement, constituted in their turn the leaven of the democratic party of the "Levellers."

Without the moral influence of the revolutionary proletarian elements on the general mass of the soldiers, without the pressure of the democratic mass of the soldiers upon the bourgeois upper layers of the party of



the Independents, there would have been no "purge" of the Long Parliament of its Presbyterians, nor any victorious ending to the war with the army of the Cavaliers and Scots, or any trial and execution of Charles I, nor any abolition of the House of Lords and proclamation of a republic.

And what happened in the Great French Revolution? Here, after four years of struggle, the seizure of power by the Jacobins proved to be the only means of saving the conquests of the revolution, of achieving a republic, of smashing feudalism, of organizing a revolutionary defense against inner as well as outer foes, of suppressing the conspiracies of counter-revolution and spreading the revolutionary wave from France to all Europe.

Kautsky and his Russian coreligionists who wanted to see the Russian Revolution keep the "bourgeois character" of its first phase, are an exact counterpart of those German and English liberals of the preceding century who distinguished between the two well-known periods of the Great French Revolution: the "good" revolution of the first Girondin phase and the "bad" one after the Jacobin uprising. The Liberal shallowness of this conception of history, to be sure, doesn't care to understand that, without the uprising of the "immoderate" Jacobins, even the first, timid and half-hearted achievements of the Girondin phase would soon have been buried under the ruins of the revolution, and that the real alternative to Jacobin dictatorship -- as the iron course of historical development posed the question in 1793 -- was not "moderate" democracy, but... restoration of the Bourbons! The "golden mean" cannot be maintained in any revolution. The law of its nature

demands a quick decision: either the locomotive drives forward full steam ahead to the most extreme point of the historical ascent, or it rolls back of its own weight again to the starting point at the bottom; and those who would keep it with their weak powers half way up the hill, it drags down with it irredeemably into the abyss.

Thus it is clear that in every revolution only that party capable of seizing the leadership and power which has the courage to issue the appropriate watch-words for driving the revolution ahead, and the courage to draw all the necessary conclusions from the situation. This makes clear, too, the miserable role of the Russian Mensheviks, the Dans, Zeretellis, etc., who had enormous influence on the masses at the beginning, but, after their prolonged wavering and after they had fought with both hands and feet against taking over power and responsibility, were driven ignobly off the stage.

The party of Lenin was the only one which grasped the mandate and duty of a truly revolutionary party and which, by the slogan -- "All power in the hands of the proletariat and peasantry" -- insured the continued development of the revolution.

Thereby the Bolsheviks solved the famous problem of "winning a majority of the people," which problem has ever weighed on the German Social-Democracy like a nightmare. As bred-in-the-bone disciples of parliamentary cretinism[3], these German Social-Democrats have sought to apply to revolutions the home-made wisdom of the parliamentary nursery: in order to carry anything, you must first have a majority. The same, they say, applies to a revolution: first let's become a "majority." The true dialectic of revolutions, however,

stands this wisdom of parliamentary moles on its head: not through a majority, but through revolutionary tactics to a majority -- that's the way the road runs.

Only a party which knows how to lead, that is, to advance things, wins support in stormy times. The determination with which, at the decisive moment, Lenin and his comrades offered the only solution which could advance things ("all power in the hands of the proletariat and peasantry"), transformed them almost overnight from a persecuted, slandered, outlawed minority whose leader had to hid like Marat in cellars, into the absolute master of the situation.

Moreover, the Bolsheviks immediately set as the aim of this seizure of power a complete, far-reaching revolutionary program; not the safeguarding of bourgeois democracy, but a dictatorship of the proletariat for the purpose of realizing socialism. Thereby they won for themselves the imperishable historic distinction of having for the first time proclaimed the final aim of socialism as the direct program of practical politics.

Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary far-sightedness and consistency in an historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky and all the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honor and capacity which western Social-Democracy lacked was represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian Revolution; it was also the salvation of the honor of international socialism.

#### Footnotes

[1] During the war the German Social-Democracy divided into three factions: the majority leadership, which openly supported and entered into the Imperial government; the Kautsky section, which declined responsibility for the conduct of the war but supplied many of the theoretical arguments for those who accepted such responsibility; and the section led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, which openly opposed the war and counterposed international solidarity and proletarian revolution to it.

[2] Here, as at various points in the manuscript, the passage is still in the form of rough notations which Rosa Luxemburg intended to complete later. Her murder by military agents of the Social-Democratic coalition government prevented her from completing and revising the work. The expression, "the International an instrument of peace" refers to the excuses Kautsky gave for its bankruptcy during the war ("an instrument of peace is not suited to times of war"). It probably refers also to the theory that the International, being peaceful, is not an instrument for revolutionary struggle. Kautsky substituted utopian talk of disarmament (without the removal of the causes and roots of war!) for a revolutionary struggle against war. He provided apologetics for the League of Nations which was supposed to have banished war from the world, and he justified socialists who abandoned internationalism, supported their own governments and ruling classes, and became in theory and practice nationalists instead of internationalists. When the struggle for socialism began in earnest, the Scheidemanns defended capitalism against socialism in practice, while Kautsky did so in theory by explaining that capitalist "democracy" was democracy in the abstract, and that they were defending "democracy." Hence the third point means: the advocacy of democracy as against socialism.

The passage in slightly expanded form might read something as follows:

- (1) the International as an instrument for peace-time only and for the maintenance of peace;
- (2) advocacy of the doctrines of disarmament, apologetics for the League of Nations and nationalism against internationalism;
- (3) and the advocacy of "democracy" as against socialism.

[3] A term first applied by Marx to those parliamentarians who think that all history is decided by motions, votes and points of parliamentary debate.

## II. THE BOLSHEVIK LAND POLICY

The Bolsheviks are the historic heirs of the English Levellers and the French Jacobins. But the concrete task which faced them after the seizure of power was incomparably more difficult than that of their historical predecessors. (Importance of the agrarian question. Even in 1905. Then, in the Third Duma, the right-wing peasants! The peasant question and defense, the army.)  
[1]

Surely the solution of the problem by the direct, immediate seizure and distribution of the land by the peasants was the shortest, simplest, most clean-cut formula to achieve two diverse things: to break down large land-ownership, and immediately to bind the peasants to the revolutionary government. As a political measure to fortify the proletarian socialist government, it was an excellent tactical move. Unfortunately, however, it had two sides to it; and the reverse side consisted in the fact that the direct seizure of the land by the peasants has in general nothing at all in common with socialist economy.

A socialist transformation of economic relationships presupposes two things so far as agrarian relationships are concerned:

In the first place, only the nationalization of the large landed estates, as the technically most advanced and most concentrated means and methods of agrarian production, can serve as the point of departure for the socialist mode of production on the land. Of course, it is not necessary to take away from the small peasant his

parcel of land, and we can with confidence leave him to be won over voluntarily by the superior advantages first of union in cooperation and then finally of inclusion in the general socialized economy as a whole. Still, every socialist economic reform on the land must obviously begin with large and medium land-ownership. Here the property right must first of all be turned over to the nation, or to the state, which, with a socialist government, amounts to the same thing; for it is this alone which affords the possibility of organizing agricultural production in accord with the requirements of interrelated, large-scale socialist production.

Moreover, in the second place, it is one of the prerequisites of this transformation, that the separation between rural economy and industry which is so characteristic of bourgeois society, should be ended in such a way as to bring about a mutual interpenetration and fusion of both, to clear the way for the planning of both agrarian and industrial production according to a unified point of view. Whatever individual form the practical economic arrangements may take -- whether through urban communes, as some propose, or directed from a governmental center -- in any event, it must be preceded by a reform introduced from the center, and that in turn must be preceded by the nationalization of the land. The nationalization of the large and middle-sized estates and the union of industry and agriculture -- these are two fundamental requirements of any socialist economic reform, without which there is no socialism.

That the Soviet government in Russia has not carried through these mighty reforms -- who can reproach them for that! It would be a sorry jest indeed to demand or expect of Lenin and his comrades that, in the brief period

of their rule, in the center of the gripping whirlpool of domestic and foreign struggles, ringed about by countless foes and opponents -- to expect that under such circumstances they should already have solved, or even tackled, one of the most difficult tasks, indeed, we can safely say, the most difficult task of the socialist transformation of society! Even in the West, under the most favorable conditions, once we have come to power, we too will break many a tooth on this hard nut before we are out of the worst of the thousands of complicated difficulties of this gigantic task!

A socialist government which has come to power must in any event do one thing: it must take measures which lead in the direction of that fundamental prerequisite for a later socialist reform of agriculture; it must at least avoid everything which may bar the way to those measures.

Now the slogan launched by the Bolsheviks, immediate seizure and distribution of the land by the peasants, necessarily tended in the opposite direction. Not only is it not a socialist measure; it even cuts off the way to such measures; it piles up insurmountable obstacles to the socialist transformation of agrarian agriculture.

The seizure of the landed estates by the peasants according to the short and precise slogan of Lenin and his friends -- "Go and take the land for yourselves" -- simply led to the sudden, chaotic conversion of large landownership into peasant landownership. What was created is not social property but a new form of private property, namely, the breaking up of large estates into medium and small estates, or relatively advanced large units of production into primitive small units which

operate with technical means from the time of the Pharaohs.

Nor is that all! Through these measures and the chaotic and purely arbitrary manner of their execution, differentiation in landed property, far from being eliminated, was even further sharpened. Although the Bolsheviks called upon the peasantry to form peasant committees so that the seizure of the nobles' estates might, in some fashion, be made into a collective act, yet it is clear that this general advice could not change anything in the real practice and real relations of power on the land. With or without committees, it was the rich peasants and usurers who made up the village bourgeoisie possessing the actual power in the hands in every Russian village, that surely became the chief beneficiaries of the agrarian revolution. Without being there to see, any one can figure out for himself that in the course of the distribution of the land, social and economic inequality among the peasants was not eliminated but rather increased, and that class antagonisms were further sharpened. The shift of power, however, took place to the disadvantage of the interests of the proletariat and of socialism. Formerly, there was only a small caste of noble and capitalist landed proprietors and a small minority of rich village bourgeoisie to oppose a socialist reform on the land. And their expropriation by a revolutionary mass movement of the people is mere child's play. But now, after the "seizure," as an opponent of any attempt at socialization of agrarian production, there is an enormous, newly developed and powerful mass of owning peasants who will defend their newly won property with tooth and nail against every attack. The question of the future socialization of agrarian economy -- that is, any



socialization of production in general in Russia -- has now become a question of opposition and of struggle between the urban proletariat and the mass of the peasantry. How sharp this antagonism has already become is shown by the peasant boycott of the cities, in which they withhold the means of existence to carry on speculation in them, in quite the same way as the Prussian Junker does.

The French small peasant became the boldest defender of the Great French Revolution which had given him land confiscated from the émigrés. As Napoleonic soldier, he carried the banner of France to victory, crossed all Europe and smashed feudalism to pieces in one land after another. Lenin and his friends might have expected a similar result from their agrarian slogan. However, now that the Russian peasant has seized the land with his own fist, he does not even dream of defending Russia and the revolution to which he owes the land. He has dug obstinately into his new possessions and abandoned the revolution to its enemies, the state to decay, the urban population to famine.

(Lenin's speech on the necessity of centralization of industry, nationalization of banks, of trade and of industry. Why not of the land? Here, on the contrary, decentralization and private property.)

(Lenin's own agrarian program before the revolution was different. The slogan taken over from the much condemned Socialist-Revolutionaries, or rather, from the spontaneous peasant movement.)

(In order to introduce socialist principles into agrarian relations, the Soviet government now seeks to create

agrarian communes out of proletarians, mostly city unemployed. But it is easy to see in advance that the results of these efforts must remain so insignificant as to disappear when measured against the whole scope of agrarian relations. After the most appropriate starting points for socialist economy, the large estates, have been broken up into small units, now they are trying to build up communist model production units out of petty beginnings. Under the circumstances these communes can claim to be considered only as experiments and not as general social reform. Grain monopoly with bounties. Now, post-festum, they want to introduce the class war into the village!) [1]

The Leninist agrarian reform has created a new and powerful layer of popular enemies of socialism on the countryside, enemies whose resistance will be much more dangerous and stubborn than that of the noble large landowners.

#### Footnotes

[1] Here, as in a number of other places, the manuscript consists only of rough notes which Rosa Luxemburg intended to expand later. As the meaning of these passages is in general clear, I have preferred to translate them literally, just as the author left them.

### III. THE NATIONALITIES QUESTION

The Bolsheviks are in part responsible for the fact that the military defeat was transformed into the collapse and breakdown of Russia. Moreover, the Bolsheviks themselves have, to a great extent, sharpened the objective difficulties of this situation by a slogan which they placed in the foreground of their policies: the so-called right of self-determination of peoples, or -- something which was really implicit in this slogan -- the disintegration of Russia.

The formula of the right of the various nationalities of the Russian empire to determine their fate independently "even to the point of the right of governmental separation from Russia," was proclaimed again with doctrinaire obstinacy as a special battle cry of Lenin and his comrades during their opposition against Miliukovist, and then Kerenskyan imperialism. [1] It constituted the axis of their inner policy after the October Revolution also, and it constituted the entire platform of the Bolsheviks at Brest-Litovsk; all they had to oppose to the display of force by German imperialism.

One is immediately struck with the obstinacy and rigid consistency with which Lenin and his comrades stuck to this slogan, a slogan which is in sharp contradiction to their otherwise outspoken centralism in politics as well as to the attitude they have assumed towards other democratic principles. While they showed a quite cool contempt for the Constituent Assembly, universal suffrage, freedom of press and assemblage, in short, for the whole apparatus of the basic democratic liberties of the people which, taken all together, constituted the

"right of self-determination" inside Russia, they treated the right of self-determination of peoples as a jewel of democratic policy for the sake of which all practical considerations of real criticism had to be stilled. While they did not permit themselves to be imposed upon in the slightest by the plebiscite for the Constituent Assembly in Russia, a plebiscite on the basis of the most democratic suffrage in the world, carried out in the full freedom of a popular republic, and while they simply declared this plebiscite null and void on the basis of a very sober evaluation of its results, still they championed the "popular vote" of the foreign nationalities of Russia on the question of which land they wanted to belong to, as the true palladium of all freedom and democracy, the unadulterated quintessence of the will of the peoples and as the court of last resort in questions of the political fate of nations.

The contradiction that is so obvious here is all the harder to understand since the democratic forms of political life in each land, as we shall see, actually involve the most valuable and even indispensable foundations of socialist policy, whereas the famous "right of self-determination of nations" is nothing but hollow, petty-bourgeois phraseology and humbug.

Indeed, what is this right supposed to signify? It belongs to the ABC of socialist policy that socialism opposes every form of oppression, including also that of one nation by another.

If, despite all this, such generally sober and critical politicians as Lenin and Trotsky and their friends, who have nothing but an ironical shrug for every sort of utopian phrase such as disarmament, league of nations,

etc., have in this case made a hollow phrase of exactly the same kind into their special hobby, this arose, it seems to us, as a result of some kind of policy made to order for the occasion. Lenin and his comrades clearly calculated that there was no surer method of binding the many foreign peoples within the Russian Empire to the cause of the revolution, to the cause of the socialist proletariat, than that of offering them, in the name of the revolution and of socialism, the most extreme and most unlimited freedom to determine their own fate. This was analogous to the policy of the Bolsheviks towards the Russian peasants, whose land-hunger was satisfied by the slogan of direct seizure of the noble estates and who were supposed to be bound thereby to the banner of the revolution and the proletarian government. In both cases, unfortunately, the calculation was entirely wrong.

While Lenin and his comrades clearly expected that, as champions of national freedom even to the extent of "separation," they would turn Finland, the Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic countries, the Caucasus, etc., into so many faithful allies of the Russian Revolution, we have instead witnessed the opposite spectacle. One after another, these "nations" used the freshly granted freedom to ally themselves with German imperialism against the Russian Revolution as its mortal enemy, and, under German protection, to carry the banner of counter-revolution into Russia itself. The little game with the Ukraine at Brest, which caused a decisive turn of affairs in those negotiations and brought about the entire inner and outer political situation at present prevailing for the Bolsheviks, is a perfect case in point. The conduct of Finland, Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic lands, the peoples of the Caucasus, shows most

convincingly that we are not dealing here with an exceptional case, but with a typical phenomenon.

To be sure, in all these cases, it was really not the "people" who engaged in these reactionary policies, but only the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois classes, who -- in sharpest opposition to their own proletarian masses -- perverted the "national right of self-determination" into an instrument of their counter-revolutionary class politics. But -- and here we come to the very heart of the question -- it is in this that the utopian, petty-bourgeois character of this nationalistic slogan resides: that in the midst of the crude realities of class society and when class antagonisms are sharpened to the uttermost, it is simply converted into a means of bourgeois class rule. The Bolsheviks were to be taught to their own great hurt and that of the revolution, that under the rule of capitalism there is no self-determination of peoples, that in a class society each class of the nation strives to "determine itself" in a different fashion, and that, for the bourgeois classes, the standpoint of national freedom is fully subordinated to that of class rule. The Finnish bourgeoisie, like the Ukrainian bourgeoisie, were unanimous in preferring the violent rule of Germany to national freedom, if the latter should be bound up with Bolshevism.

The hope of transforming these actual class relationships somehow into their opposite and of getting a majority vote for union with the Russian Revolution by depending on the revolutionary masses -- if it was seriously meant by Lenin and Trotsky -- represented an incomprehensible degree of optimism. And if it was only meant as a tactical flourish in the duel with the German politics of force, then it represented dangerous playing with fire.

Even without German military occupation, the famous "popular plebiscite," supposing that it had come to that in the border states, would have yielded a result, in all probability, which would have given the Bolsheviks little cause for rejoicing; for we must take into consideration the psychology of the peasant masses and of great sections of the petty bourgeoisie, and the thousand ways in which the bourgeoisie could have influenced the vote. Indeed, it can be taken as an unbreakable rule in these matters of plebiscites on the national question that the ruling class will either know how to prevent them where it doesn't suit their purpose, or where they somehow occur, will know how to influence their results by all sorts of means, big and little, the same means which make it impossible to introduce socialism by a popular vote.

The mere fact that the question of national aspirations and tendencies towards separation were injected at all into the midst of the revolutionary struggle, and were even pushed into the foreground and made into the shibboleth of socialist and revolutionary policy as a result of the Brest peace, has served to bring the greatest confusion into socialist ranks and has actually destroyed the position of the proletariat in the border countries.

In Finland, so long as the socialist proletariat fought as a part of the closed Russian revolutionary phalanx, it possessed a position of dominant power: it had the majority in the Finnish parliament, in the army; it had reduced its own bourgeoisie to complete impotence, and was master of the situation within its borders.

Or take the Ukraine. At the beginning of the century, before the tomfoolery of "Ukrainian nationalism" with

its silver rubles and its "Universals" [2] and Lenin's hobby of an "independent Ukraine" had been invented, the Ukraine was the stronghold of the Russian revolutionary movement. From there, from Rostov, from Odessa, from the Donetz region, flowed out the first lava-streams of the revolution (as early as 1902-04) which kindled all South Russia into a sea of flame, thereby preparing the uprising of 1905. The same thing was repeated in the present revolution, in which the South Russian proletariat supplied the picked troops of the proletarian phalanx. Poland and the Baltic lands have been since 1905 the mightiest and most dependable hearths of revolution, and in them the socialist proletariat has played an outstanding role.

How does it happen then that in all these lands the counter-revolution suddenly triumphs? The nationalist movement, just because it tore the proletariat loose from Russia, crippled it thereby, and delivered it into the hands of the bourgeoisie of the border countries.

Instead of acting in the same spirit of genuine international class policy which they represented in other matters, instead of working for the most compact union of the revolutionary forces throughout the area of the Empire, instead of defending tooth and nail the integrity of the Russian Empire as an area of revolution and opposing to all forms of separatism the solidarity and inseparability of the proletarians in all lands within the sphere of the Russian Revolution as the highest command of politics, the Bolsheviks, by their hollow nationalistic phraseology concerning the "right of self-determination to the point of separation," have accomplished quite the contrary and supplied the bourgeoisie in all border states with the finest, the most



desirable pretext, the very banner of the counter-revolutionary efforts. Instead of warning the proletariat in the border countries against all forms of separatism as mere bourgeois traps, they did nothing but confuse the masses in all the border countries by their slogan and delivered them up to the demagoguery of the bourgeois classes. By this nationalistic demand they brought on the disintegration of Russia itself, pressed into the enemy's hand the knife which it was to thrust into the heart of the Russian Revolution.

To be sure, without the help of German imperialism, without "the German rifle butts in German fists," as Kautsky's *Neue Zeit* put it, the Lubinskys and other little scoundrels of the Ukraine, the Erichs and Mannerheims of Finland, and the Baltic barons, would never have gotten the better of the socialist masses of the workers in their respective lands. But national separatism was the Trojan horse inside which the German "comrades," bayonet in hand, made their entrance into all those lands. The real class antagonisms and relations of military force brought about German intervention. But the Bolsheviks provided the ideology which masked this campaign of counter-revolution; they strengthened the position of the bourgeoisie and weakened that of the proletariat.

The best proof is the Ukraine, which was to play so frightful a role in the fate of the Russian Revolution. Ukrainian nationalism in Russia was something quite different from, let us say, Czechish, Polish or Finnish nationalism in that the former was a mere whim, a folly of a few dozen petty-bourgeois intellectuals without the slightest roots in the economic, political or psychological relationships of the country; it was without any historical tradition, since the Ukraine never formed a nation or

government, was without any national culture, except for the reactionary-romantic poems of Shevschenko. It is exactly as if, one fine day, the people living in the Wasserkante [3] should want to found a new Low-German (Plattdeutsche) nation and government! And this ridiculous pose of a few university professors and students was inflated into a political force by Lenin and his comrades through their doctrinaire agitation concerning the "right of self-determination including etc." To what was at first a mere farce they lent such importance that the farce became a matter of the most deadly seriousness -- not as a serious national movement for which, afterward as before, there are no roots at all, but as a shingle and rallying flag of counter-revolution! At Brest, out of this addled egg crept the German bayonets.

There are times when such phrases have a very real meaning in the history of the class struggles. It is the unhappy lot of socialism that in this World War it was given to it to supply the ideological screens for counter-revolutionary policy. At the outbreak of the war, German Social-Democracy hastened to deck the predatory expedition of German imperialism with an ideological shield from the lumber-room of Marxism by declaring it to be a liberating expedition against Russian Czarism, such as our old teachers (Marx and Engels) had longed for. And to the lot of the Bolsheviks, who were the very antipodes of our government socialists, did it fall to supply grist for the mill of counter-revolution with their phrases about self-determination of peoples; and thereby to supply not alone the ideology for the strangling of the Russian Revolution itself, but even for the plans for settling the entire crisis arising out of the World War.

We have good reason to examine very carefully the policies of the Bolsheviks in this regard. The "right of self-determination of peoples," coupled with the League of Nations and disarmament by the grace of President Wilson, constitute the battle-cry under which the coming reckoning of international socialism with the bourgeoisie is to be settled. It is obvious that the phrases concerning self-determination and the entire nationalist movement, which at present constitute the greatest danger for international socialism, have experienced an extraordinary strengthening from the Russian Revolution and the Brest negotiations. We shall yet have to go into this platform thoroughly. The tragic fate of these phrases in the Russian Revolution, on the thorns of which the Bolsheviks were themselves, destined to be caught and bloodily scratched, must serve the international proletariat as a warning and lesson.

And from this there followed the dictatorship of Germany from the time of the Brest treaty to the time of the "supplementary treaty." The two hundred expiatory sacrifices in Moscow. From this situation arose the terror and suppression of democracy. [4]

#### Footnotes

[1] Luxemburg refers to the governments of Miliukov and Kerensky were two regimes preceding that of the Bolsheviks during the earlier months of 1917, after the downfall of the Czar. Both of these governments attempted to continue the war for the imperialist objectives of the old Russian Empire and denied the right of the national minorities to separation from Russia.

[2] The manuscript speaks of Karbowentzen, which I take to be a Germanization of the Russian word for "silver ruble," probably referring to a special Ukrainian coinage, and of "Universals," the name applied to certain manifestoes or declarations of the Ukrainian Rada (national assembly).

[3] A region in Germany where the German dialect known as Plattdeutsch is spoken.

[4] Six weeks after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, there was a codicil or supplement signed. The "two hundred expiatory sacrifices" may refer to the execution of persons charged with complicity in the assassination of the German ambassador to Russia, Count von Mirbach. He was shot by members of the Russian Socialist-Revolutionary party, which had cooperated with the Bolsheviks until the signing of the Brest treaty and then went into opposition and tried by various means to prevent the signing of the treaty. From this time forward, the Russian government was a one-party government

#### IV. THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Let us test this matter further by taking a few examples.

The well-known dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in November 1917 played an outstanding role in the policy of the Bolsheviks. This measure was decisive for their further position; to a certain point it represented a turning point in their tactics.

It is a fact that Lenin and his comrades were stormily demanding the calling of a Constituent Assembly up to the time of their October victory, and that the policy of dragging out this matter on the part of the Kerensky government constituted an article in the indictment of that government by the Bolsheviks and was the basis of some of their most violent attacks upon it. Indeed, Trotsky says in his interesting pamphlet, *From October to Brest-Litovsk*, that the October Revolution represented "the salvation of the Constituent Assembly" as well as of the revolution as a whole. "And when we said," he continues, "that the entrance to the Constituent Assembly could not be reached through the Preliminary Parliament of Zeretelli, but only through the seizure of power by the Soviets, we were entirely right."

And then, after these declarations, Lenin's first step after the October Revolution was... the dissolution of this same Constituent Assembly, to which it was supposed to be an entrance. What reasons could be decisive for so astonishing a turn? Trotsky, in the above-mentioned pamphlet, discusses the matter thoroughly, and we will set down his argument here:

"While the months preceding the October Revolution were a time of leftward movement on the part of the masses and of an elemental flow of workers, soldiers and peasants towards the Bolsheviks, inside the Socialist-Revolutionary Party this process expressed itself as a strengthening of the left wing at the cost of the right. But within the list of party candidates of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the old names of the right wing still occupied three-fourths of the places..."

"Then there was the further circumstance that the elections themselves took place in the course of the first weeks after the October Revolution. The news of the change that had taken place spread rather slowly in concentric circles from the capital to the provinces and from the towns to the villages. The peasant masses in many places had little notion of what went on in Petrograd and Moscow. They voted for 'Land and Freedom,' and elected as their representatives in the land committees those who stood under the banner of the 'Narodniki.' Thereby, however, they voted for Kerensky and Avksentiev, who had been dissolving these land committees and having their members arrested... This state of affairs gives a clear idea of the extent to which the Constituent Assembly had lagged behind the development of the political struggle and the development of party groupings."

All of this is very fine and quite convincing. But one cannot help wondering how such clever people as Lenin and Trotsky failed to arrive at the conclusion which follows immediately from the above facts. Since the Constituent Assembly was elected long before the decisive turning point, the October Revolution, [1] and its composition reflected the picture of the vanished past

and not of the new state of affairs, then it follows automatically that the outgrown and therefore still-born Constituent Assembly should have been annulled, and without delay, new elections to a new Constituent Assembly should have been arranged. They did not want to entrust, nor should they have entrusted, the fate of the revolution to an assemblage which reflected the Kerenskyan Russian of yesterday, of the period of vacillations and coalition with the bourgeoisie. Hence there was nothing left to do except to convoke an assembly that would issue forth out of the renewed Russia that had advanced further.

Instead of this, from the special inadequacy of the Constituent Assembly which came together in October, Trotsky draws a general conclusion concerning the inadequacy of any popular representation whatsoever which might come from universal popular elections during the revolution.

"Thanks to the open and direct struggle for governmental power," he writes, "the laboring masses acquire in the shortest time an accumulation of political experience, and they climb rapidly from step to step in their political development. The bigger the country and the more rudimentary its technical apparatus, the less is the cumbersome mechanism of democratic institutions able to keep pace with this development."

Here we find the "mechanism of democratic institutions," as such called in question. To this we must at once object that in such an estimate of representative institutions there lies a somewhat rigid and schematic conception which is expressly contradicted by the historical experience of every revolutionary epoch.

According to Trotsky's theory, every elected assembly reflects once and for all only the mental composition, political maturity and mood of its electorate just at the moment when the latter goes to the polling place. According to that, a democratic body is the reflection of the masses at the end of the electoral period, much as the heavens of Herschel always show us the heavenly bodies not as they are when we are looking at them but as they were at the moment they sent out their light-messages to the earth from the measureless distances of space. Any living mental connection between the representatives, once they have been elected, and the electorate, any permanent interaction between one and the other, is hereby denied.

Yet how all historical experience contradicts this! Experience demonstrates quite the contrary: namely, that the living fluid of the popular mood continuously flows around the living fluid of the popular mood continuously flows around the representative bodies, penetrates them, guides them. How else would it be possible to witness, as we do at times in every bourgeois parliament, the amusing capers of the "people's representatives," who are suddenly inspired by a new "spirit" and give forth quite unexpected sounds; or to find the most dried-out mummies at times comporting themselves like youngsters and the most diverse little Scheidemaennchen [2] suddenly finding revolutionary tones in their breasts - - whenever there is rumbling in factories and workshops on the street.

And is this ever-living influence of the mood and degree of political ripeness of the masses upon the elected bodies to be renounced in favor of a rigid scheme of party emblems and tickets in the very midst of



revolution? Quite the contrary! It is precisely the revolution which creates by its glowing heat that delicate, vibrant, sensitive political atmosphere in which the waves of popular feeling, the pulse of popular life, work for moment on the representative bodies in most wonderful fashion. It is on this very fact, to be sure, that the well-known moving scenes depend which invariably present themselves in the first stages of every revolution, scenes in which old reactionaries or extreme moderates, who have issued out of a parliamentary election by limited suffrage under the old regime, suddenly become the heroic and stormy spokesmen of the uprising. The classic example is provided by the famous "Long Parliament" in England, which was elected and assembled 1642 and remained at its post for seven whole years and reflected in its internal life all alterations and displacements of popular feeling, of political ripeness, of class differentiation, of the progress of the revolution to its highest point, from the initial devout skirmishes with the Crown under a Speaker who remains on his knees, to the abolition of the House of Lords, the execution of Charles and the proclamation of the republic.

And was not the same wonderful transformation repeated in the French Estates-General, in the censorship-subjected parliament of Louis Phillipe, and even -- and this last, most striking example was very close to Trotsky -- even in the Fourth Russian Duma which, elected in the Year of Grace 1909 under the most rigid rule of the counter-revolution, suddenly felt the glowing heat of the impending overturn and became the point of departure for the revolution? [3]

All this shows that "the cumbersome mechanism of democratic institutions" possesses a powerful corrective

-- namely, the living movement of the masses, their unending pressure. And the more democratic the institutions, the livelier and stronger the pulse-beat of the political life of the masses, the more direct and complete is their influence -- despite rigid party banners, outgrown tickets (electoral lists), etc. To be sure, every democratic institution has its limits and shortcomings, things which it doubtless shares with all other human institutions. But the remedy which Trotsky and Lenin have found, the elimination of democracy as such, is worse than the disease it is supposed to cure; for it stops up the very living source from which alone can come correction of all the innate shortcomings of social institutions. That source is the active, untrammelled, energetic political life of the broadest masses of the people.

#### Footnotes

[1] Luxemburg is not quite correct. Elections for the Constituent Assembly were mostly arranged prior to the October Revolution, but the elections took place after October.

[2] "Little Scheidemen," a play on the name of the pro-war, government Social-Democrat, Phillip Scheidemann.

[3] It was this Fourth Duma which, after popular demonstrations in February 1917, sent two emissaries to the Czar to request his abdication.

## V. THE QUESTION OF SUFFRAGE

Let's take another striking example: the right of suffrage as worked out by the Soviet government. It is not clear what practical significance is attributed to the right of suffrage. From the critique of democratic institutions by Lenin and Trotsky, it appears that popular representation on the basis of universal suffrage is rejected by them on principle, and that they want to base themselves only on the soviets. Why, then, any general suffrage system was worked out at all is really not clear. It is also not known to us whether this right of suffrage was put in practice anywhere; nothing has been heard of any elections to any kind of popular representative body on the basis of it. More likely, it is only a theoretical product, so to speak, of diplomacy; but, as it is, it constitutes a remarkable product of the Bolshevik theory of dictatorship.

Every right of suffrage, like any political right in general, is not to be measured by some sort of abstract scheme of "justice," or in terms of any other bourgeois-democratic phrases, but by the social and economic relationships for which it is designed. The right of suffrage worked out by the Soviet government is calculated for the transition period from the bourgeois-capitalist to the socialist form of society, that is, it is calculated for the period of the proletarian dictatorship. But, according to the interpretation of this dictatorship which Lenin and Trotsky represent, the right to vote is granted only to those who live by their own labor and is denied to everyone else.

Now it is clear that such a right to vote has meaning only in a society which is in a position to make possible for

all who want to work an adequate civilized life on the basis of one's own labor. Is that the case in Russia at present? Under the terrific difficulties which Russia has to contend with, cut off as she is from the world market and from her most important source of raw materials, and under circumstances involving a terrific general uprooting of economic life and a rude overturn of production relationships as a result of the transformation of property relationships in land and industry and trade -- under such circumstances, it is clear that countless existences are quite suddenly uprooted, derailed without any objective possibility of finding any employment for their labor power within the economic mechanism. This applies not only to the capitalist and land-owning masses, but to the broad layer of the middle class also, and even to the working class itself. It is a known fact that the construction of industry has resulted in a mass-scale return of the urban proletariat to the open country in search of a place in rural economy. Under such circumstances, a political right of suffrage on the basis of a general obligation to labor, is a quite incomprehensible measure. According to the main trend, only the exploiters are supposed to be deprived of their political rights. And, on the other hand, at the same time that productive labor powers are being uprooted on a mass scale, the Soviet government is often compelled to hand over national industry to its former owners, on lease, so to speak. In the same way, the Soviet government was forced to conclude a compromise with the bourgeois consumers' cooperatives also. Further, the use of bourgeois specialists proved unavoidable. Another consequence of the same situation is that growing sections of the proletariat, for whom the economic mechanism provides no means of exercising the

obligation to work, are rendered politically without any rights.

It makes no sense to regard the right of suffrage as a utopian product of fantasy, cut loose from social reality. And it is for this reason that it is not a serious instrument of the proletarian dictatorship. It is an anachronism, an anticipation of the juridical situation which is proper on the basis of an already completed socialist economy, but is not in the transition period of the proletarian dictatorship.

As the entire middle class, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois intelligentsia, boycotted the Soviet government for months after the October Revolution and crippled the railroad, post and telegraph, and educational and administrative apparatus, and, in this fashion, opposed the workers government, naturally all measures of pressure were exerted against it. These included the deprivation of political rights, of economic means of existence, etc., in order to break their resistance with an iron fist. It was precisely in this way that the socialist dictatorship expressed itself, for it cannot shrink from any use of force to secure or prevent certain measures involving the interests of the whole. But when it comes to a suffrage law which provides for the general disfranchisement of broad sections of society, whom it places politically outside the framework of society and, at the same time, is not in a position to make any place for them even economically within that framework, when it involves a deprivation of rights not as concrete measures for a concrete purpose but as a general rule of long-standing effect, then, it is not a necessity of dictatorship but a makeshift, incapable of being carried out in life. This applies alike to the soviets as the

foundation, and to the Constituent Assembly and the general suffrage law.[1]

But the Constituent Assembly and the suffrage law do not exhaust the matter. We did not consider above the destruction of the most important democratic guarantees of a healthy public life and of the political activity of the laboring masses: freedom of the press, the rights of association and assembly, which have been outlawed for all opponents of the Soviet regime. For these attacks (on democratic rights), the arguments of Trotsky cited above, on the cumbersome nature of democratic electoral bodies, are far from satisfactory. On the other hand, it is a well-known and indisputable fact that without a free and untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assemblage, the rule of the broad masses of the people is entirely unthinkable.

#### Footnotes

[1] The following passage was found crossed out on an unnumbered loose sheet of paper in the manuscript:

The Bolsheviks designated the soviets as reactionary because their majority consisted of peasants (peasant and soldier delegates). After the Soviets went over to them, they became correct representatives of public opinion. But this sudden change was connected only with peace and land questions.

## VI. THE PROBLEM OF DICTATORSHIP

Lenin says [in *The State and Revolution: The Transition from Capitalism to Communism*]: the bourgeois state is an instrument of oppression of the working class; the socialist state, of the bourgeoisie. To a certain extent, he says, it is only the capitalist state stood on its head. This simplified view misses the most essential thing: bourgeois class rule has no need of the political training and education of the entire mass of the people, at least not beyond certain narrow limits. But for the proletarian dictatorship that is the life element, the very air without which it is not able to exist.

"Thanks to the open and direct struggle for governmental power," writes Trotsky, "the laboring masses accumulate in the shortest time a considerable amount of political experience and advance quickly from one stage to another of their development."

Here Trotsky refutes himself and his own friends. Just because this is so, they have blocked up the fountain of political experience and the source of this rising development by their suppression of public life! Or else we would have to assume that experience and development were necessary up to the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, and then, having reached their highest peak, become superfluous thereafter. (Lenin's speech: Russia is won for socialism!!!)

In reality, the opposite is true! It is the very giant tasks which the Bolsheviks have undertaken with courage and determination that demand the most intensive political

training of the masses and the accumulation of experience.

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party -- however numerous they may be -- is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of "justice" but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when "freedom" becomes a special privilege.

The Bolsheviks themselves will not want, with hand on heart, to deny that, step by step, they have to feel out the ground, try out, experiment, test now one way now another, and that a good many of their measures do not represent priceless pearls of wisdom. Thus it must and will be with all of us when we get to the same point--even if the same difficult circumstances may not prevail everywhere.

The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which needs only to be carried out energetically in practice. This is, unfortunately -- or perhaps fortunately - - not the case. Far from being a sum of ready-made prescriptions which have only to be applied, the practical realization of socialism as an economic, social and juridical system is something which lies completely hidden in the mists of the future. What we possess in our program is nothing but a few main signposts which indicate the general direction in which to look for the



necessary measures, and the indications are mainly negative in character at that. Thus we know more or less what we must eliminate at the outset in order to free the road for a socialist economy. But when it comes to the nature of the thousand concrete, practical measures, large and small, necessary to introduce socialist principles into economy, law and all social relationships, there is no key in any socialist party program or textbook. That is not a shortcoming but rather the very thing that makes scientific socialism superior to the utopian varieties.

The socialist system of society should only be, and can only be, an historical product, born out of the school of its own experiences, born in the course of its realization, as a result of the developments of living history, which -- just like organic nature of which, in the last analysis, it forms a part -- has the fine habit of always producing along with any real social need the means to its satisfaction, along with the task simultaneously the solution. However, if such is the case, then it is clear that socialism by its very nature cannot be decreed or introduced by ukase. It has as its prerequisite a number of measures of force -- against property, etc. The negative, the tearing down, can be decreed; the building up, the positive, cannot. New Territory. A thousand problems. Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative new force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts. The public life of countries with limited freedom is so poverty-stricken, so miserable, so rigid, so unfruitful, precisely because, through the exclusion of democracy, it cuts off the living sources of all spiritual riches and progress. (Proof: the year 1905 and the months from February to October 1917.) There it

was political in character; the same thing applies to economic and social life also. The whole mass of the people must take part in it. Otherwise, socialism will be decreed from behind a few official desks by a dozen intellectuals.

Public control is indispensably necessary. Otherwise the exchange of experiences remains only with the closed circle of the officials of the new regime. Corruption becomes inevitable. (Lenin's words, Bulletin No. 29) Socialism in life demands a complete spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of bourgeois rule. Social instincts in place of egotistical ones, mass initiative in place of inertia, idealism which conquers all suffering, etc., etc. No one knows this better, describes it more penetratingly; repeats it more stubbornly than Lenin. But he is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force of the factory overseer, draconian penalties, rule by terror -- all these things are but palliatives. The only way to a rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion. It is rule by terror which demoralizes.

When all this is eliminated, what really remains? In place of the representative bodies created by general, popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets as the only true representation of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen

party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously -- at bottom, then, a clique affair -- a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense, in the sense of the rule of the Jacobins (the postponement of the Soviet Congress from three-month periods to six-month periods!) Yes, we can go even further: such conditions must inevitably cause a brutalization of public life: attempted assassinations, shooting of hostages, etc. (Lenin's speech on discipline and corruption.)

## VII. THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CORRUPTION

A problem which is of great importance in every revolution is that of the struggle with the Lumpenproletariat. We in Germany too, as everywhere else, will have this problem to reckon with. The Lumpenproletariat element is deeply imbedded in bourgeois society. It is not merely a special section, a sort of social wastage which grows enormously when the walls of the social order are falling down, but rather an integral part of the social whole. Events in Germany -- and more or less in other countries -- have shown how easily all sections of bourgeois society are subject to such degeneration. The gradations between commercial profiteering, fictitious deals, adulteration of foodstuffs, cheating, official embezzlement, theft, burglary and robbery, flow into one another in such fashion that the boundary line between honorable citizenry and the penitentiary has disappeared. In this the same phenomenon is repeated as in the regular and rapid degeneration of bourgeois dignitaries when they are transplanted to an alien social soil in an overseas colonial setting. With the stripping off of conventional barriers and props for morality and law, bourgeois society itself falls victim to direct and limitless degeneration [Verlumpung], for its innermost law of life is the profoundest of immoralities, namely, the exploitation of man by man. The proletarian revolution will have to struggle with this enemy and instrument of counter-revolution on every hand.

And yet, in this connection too, terror is dull, nay, a two-edged sword. The harshest measures of martial law are impotent against outbreaks of the lumpenproletarian

sickness. Indeed, every persistent regime of martial law leads inevitable to arbitrariness, and every form of arbitrariness tends to deprave society. In this regard also, the only effective means in the hands of the proletarian revolution are: radical measures of a political and social character, the speediest possible transformation of the social guarantees of the life of the masses -- the kindling of revolutionary idealism, which can be maintained over any length of time only through the intensively active life of the masses themselves under conditions of unlimited political freedom.

As the free action of the sun's rays is the most effective purifying and healing remedy against infections and disease germs, so the only healing and purifying sun is the revolution itself and its renovating principle, the spiritual life, activity and initiative of the masses which is called into being by it and which takes the form of the broadest political freedom. [1]

#### Footnotes

[1] The following section, found in the original manuscript on a separate sheet of paper, repeats substantially the same ideas of this chapter but in a schematic form, apparently the draft outline for this chapter:

In our case as everywhere else, anarchy will be unavoidable. The lumpenproletarian element is deeply embedded in bourgeois society and inseparable from it.

Proofs:

\* East Prussia, the "Cossack" robberies.

\* The general outbreak of robbery and theft in Germany. (Profiteering, postal and railway personnel, police, complete dissolution of boundaries between well-ordered society and penitentiary.)

\* The rapid degeneration (Verlumpung) of the union leaders.

Against this, draconian measures of terror are powerless. On the contrary, they cause still further corruption. The only anti-toxin: the idealism and social activity of the masses, unlimited police freedom.

That is an overpowering objective law from which no party can be exempt.

## VIII. DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP

The basic error of the Lenin-Trotsky theory is that they too, just like Kautsky, oppose dictatorship to democracy. "Dictatorship or democracy" is the way the question is put by Bolsheviks and Kautsky alike. The latter naturally decides in favor of "democracy," that is, of bourgeois democracy, precisely because he opposes it to the alternative of the socialist revolution. Lenin and Trotsky, on the other hand, decide in favor of dictatorship in contradistinction to democracy, and thereby, in favor of the dictatorship of a handful of persons, that is, in favor of dictatorship on the bourgeois model. They are two opposite poles, both alike being far removed from a genuine socialist policy. The proletariat, when it seizes power, can never follow the good advice of Kautsky, given on the pretext of the "unripeness of the country," the advice being to renounce socialist revolution and devote itself to democracy. It cannot follow this advice without betraying thereby itself, the International, and the revolution. It should and must at once undertake socialist measures in the most energetic, unyielding and unhesitant fashion, in other words, exercise a dictatorship, but a dictatorship of the class, not of a party or of a clique -- dictatorship of the class, that means in the broadest possible form on the basis of the most active, unlimited participation of the mass of the people, of unlimited democracy.

"As Marxists," writes Trotsky, "we have never been idol worshippers of formal democracy." Surely, we have never been idol worshippers of socialism or Marxism either. Does it follow from this that we may throw socialism on the scrap-heap, a la Cunow, Lensch and

Parvus [i.e. Move to the right], if it becomes uncomfortable for us? Trotsky and Lenin are the living refutation of this answer.

"We have never been idol-worshippers of formal democracy." All that that really means is: We have always distinguished the social kernel from the political form of bourgeois democracy; we have always revealed the hard kernel of social inequality and lack of freedom hidden under the sweet shell of formal equality and freedom -- not in order to reject the latter but to spur the working class into not being satisfied with the shell, but rather, by conquering political power, to create a socialist democracy to replace bourgeois democracy -- not to eliminate democracy altogether.

But socialist democracy is not something which begins only in the promised land after the foundations of socialist economy are created; it does not come as some sort of Christmas present for the worthy people who, in the interim, have loyally supported a handful of socialist dictators. Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the beginnings of the destruction of class rule and of the construction of socialism. It begins at the very moment of the seizure of power by the socialist party. It is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Yes, dictatorship! But this dictatorship consists in the manner of applying democracy, not in its elimination, but in energetic, resolute attacks upon the well-entrenched rights and economic relationships of bourgeois society, without which a socialist transformation cannot be accomplished. But this dictatorship must be the work of the class and not of a little leading minority in the name of the class -- that is,



it must proceed step by step out of the active participation of the masses; it must be under their direct influence, subjected to the control of complete public activity; it must arise out of the growing political training of the mass of the people.

Doubtless the Bolsheviks would have proceeded in this very way were it not that they suffered under the frightful compulsion of the world war, the German occupation and all the abnormal difficulties connected therewith, things which were inevitably bound to distort any socialist policy, however imbued it might be with the best intentions and the finest principles.

A crude proof of this is provided by the use of terror to so wide an extent by the Soviet government, especially in the most recent period just before the collapse of German imperialism, and just after the attempt on the life of the German ambassador. The commonplace to the effect that revolutions are not pink teas is in itself pretty inadequate.

Everything that happens in Russia is comprehensible and represents an inevitable chain of causes and effects, the starting point and end term of which are: the failure of the German proletariat and the occupation of Russia by German imperialism. It would be demanding something superhuman from Lenin and his comrades if we should expect of them that under such circumstances they should conjure forth the finest democracy, the most exemplary dictatorship of the proletariat and a flourishing socialist economy. By their determined revolutionary stand, their exemplary strength in action, and their unbreakable loyalty to international socialism, they have contributed whatever could possibly be

contributed under such devilishly hard conditions. The danger begins only when they make a virtue of necessity and want to freeze into a complete theoretical system all the tactics forced upon them by these fatal circumstances, and want to recommend them to the international proletariat as a model of socialist tactics. When they get in their own light in this way, and hide their genuine, unquestionable historical service under the bushel of false steps forced on them by necessity, they render a poor service to international socialism for the sake of which they have fought and suffered; for they want to place in its storehouse as new discoveries all the distortions prescribed in Russia by necessity and compulsion -- in the last analysis only by-products of the bankruptcy of international socialism in the present world war.

Let the German Government Socialists cry that the rule of the Bolsheviks in Russia is a distorted expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. If it was or is such, that is only because it is a product of the behavior of the German proletariat, in itself a distorted expression of the socialist class struggle. All of us are subject to the laws of history, and it is only internationally that the socialist order of society can be realized. The Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of historical possibilities. They are not supposed to perform miracles. For a model and faultless proletarian revolution in an isolated land, exhausted by world war, strangled by imperialism, betrayed by the international proletariat, would be a miracle.

What is in order is to distinguish the essential from the non-essential, the kernel from the accidental

excrecencies in the politics of the Bolsheviks. In the present period, when we face decisive final struggles in all the world, the most important problem of socialism was and is the burning question of our time. It is not a matter of this or that secondary question of tactics, but of the capacity for action of the proletariat, the strength to act, the will to power of socialism as such. In this, Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the first, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world; they are still the only ones up to now who can cry with Hutten: "I have dared!"

This is the essential and enduring in Bolshevik policy. In this sense theirs is the immortal historical service of having marched at the head of the international proletariat with the conquest of political power and the practical placing of the problem of the realization of socialism, and of having advanced mightily the settlement of the score between capital and labor in the entire world. In Russia, the problem could only be posed. It could not be solved in Russia. And in this sense, the future everywhere belongs to "Bolshevism."

# **THE RUSSIAN TRAGEDY**

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Since the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Russian Revolution has entered into a very difficult phase. The policy which has guided the Bolsheviks' action is obvious: peace at any price in order to gain a respite, during which they can expand and consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, and realize as many socialist reforms as possible. They plan in this way to await the outbreak of the international proletariat revolution and at the same time to expedite it by the Russian example. Since the utter war-weariness of the Russian masses and the simultaneous military disorganization bequeathed by Tsarism appeared in any case to make the continuation of the war a futile shedding of Russian blood, there was no other way out but to conclude peace as quickly as possible. This is how Lenin and his comrades assessed the situation.

Their decision was dictated by two revolutionary viewpoints: by the unshakable faith in the European revolution of the proletariat as the sole way out and the inevitable consequence of the world war, and by their equally unshakable resolve to defend by any means possible the power they had gained in Russia, in order to use it for the most energetic and radical changes.

And yet these calculations largely overlooked the most crucial factor, namely German militarism, to which Russia surrendered unconditionally through the separate peace. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was in reality nothing but the capitulation of the revolutionary Russian proletariat to German militarism. Admittedly Lenin and his friends deluded neither themselves nor others about the facts. They candidly admitted their capitulation. Unfortunately, they did deceive themselves in hoping to purchase a genuine respite at the price of this capitulation, to enable them to save themselves from the hellfire of the world war by means of a separate peace. They did not take into account the fact that the capitulation of Russia at Brest-Litovsk meant an enormous strengthening of the imperialist Pan-German policy and thus a lessening of the chances for a revolutionary rising in Germany. Nor did they see that this capitulation would bring about not the end of the war against Germany, but merely the beginning of a new chapter of this war.

In fact the 'peace' of Brest-Litovsk is an illusion. Not for a moment was there peace between Russia and Germany. War has continued since Brest-Litovsk up to the present time, but the war is a unique one, waged only by one side: systematic German advance and tacit Bolshevik retreat, step by step. Occupation of the Ukraine, Finland, Lithuania, Estonia, the Crimea, the Caucasus, larger and larger tracts of the southern Russia – this is the result of the 'state of peace' since Brest-Litovsk.

And this has meant a number of things. In the first place, the strangulation of the revolution and the victory of the counter-revolution in the revolutionary strongholds of Russia. For Finland, the Baltic provinces, the Ukraine,

the Caucasus, the Black Sea region – this is all Russia, namely the terrain of the Russian Revolution, no matter what the empty, petit-bourgeois phrase-mongers may babble about the ‘right of national self-determination’.[A]

Secondly, this means the isolation of the Great Russian part of the revolutionary terrain from the grain-growing and coal-mining region and from the sources of iron-ore and naphtha, that is, from the most important and vital economic resources of the revolution.

Thirdly, the encouragement and strengthening of all counter-revolutionary elements within Russia, thus enabling them to offer the strongest resistance to the Bolsheviks and their measures.

Fourthly, Germany will play the role of arbiter in Russia’s political and economic relation with all of its own provinces: Finland, Lithuania, the Ukraine and the Caucasus, as well as with the neighbors, for example Rumania.

The overall result of this unrestricted and unlimited German power over Russia was naturally an enormous strengthening of German imperialism both internally and externally, and thereby of course a heightening of the white-hot resistance and war-readiness of the Entente powers, i.e. prolongation and intensification of the world war. And indeed there is more: Russia’s defencelessness, as revealed by the progressive German occupation, must naturally tempt the Entente and Japan to instigate a counter-action on Russian territory in order to combat Germany’s huge predominance and at the same time to satisfy their imperialist appetites at the expense of the

defenceless colossus. Now the north and east of European Russia, as well as the whole of Siberia, are cut off, and the Bolsheviks are isolated from their last sources of essential supplies.

The end result of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is thus to encircle, starve out and strangle the Russian revolution from all sides.

But also within the country, in the terrain that the Germans did leave to the Bolsheviks, the power and the policies of the revolution were forced into difficult straits. The assassinations of Mirbach and Eichhorn [B] are a tangible response to the reign of terror of German imperialism in Russia. Social Democracy, to be sure, has always rejected terror as an individual act, but only because it considered the mass struggle to be the more effective method, not because it preferred to tolerate passively reactionary despotism. It is of course only one of the W.T.B's [Wolff's Telegraphic Bureau's] many falsifications that says the Left-wing Social Revolutionaries carried out these assassinations at the instigation or on the orders of the Entente. These assassinations were intended either as a signal for a mass uprising against German rule or they were only impulsive acts of revenge born of despair and hatred of the bloody German rule. However, whatever their intention, they gravely endangered the cause of the revolution in Russia by creating divisions within the hitherto ruling socialist groups. They drove a wedge between the Bolsheviks and the Left-wing Social Revolutionaries; indeed, they created an abyss and a mortal enmity between the two wings of the revolutionary army. [C]

Admittedly the social differences – the antithesis between the property-owning peasantry and the peasant-proletariat and others – would sooner or later have created a split between the Bolsheviks and the Left-wing Social Revolutionaries. Until the Mirbach assassination, however, events did not appear to have progressed so far. In any case, it is a fact that the Left-wing Social Revolutionaries lent their support to the Bolsheviks. The October Revolution that brought the Bolsheviks to the helm, the breaking up of the Constituent Assembly, the Bolsheviks' reform until now, would have hardly been possible without the co-operation of the Left-wing Social Revolutionaries. Only Brest-Litovsk and its after-effects drove the wedge between the two wings. Now German imperialism appears as the arbiter between the Bolsheviks and their revolutionary allies of yesterday, just as it is the arbiter of their (the Bolsheviks') relations with the Russian border provinces and their neighbouring states. Because of this, the resistance to the Bolsheviks' rule and reform measures, huge in any case, will increase. Because of this, it is clear that the basis upon which their rule rests has been significantly diminished. Probably this internal falling-out and division of the heterogeneous elements of the revolution was inevitable, just as it is inevitable in the progressive radicalization of every developing revolution. Now, however, a controversy over the brutal German military dictatorship as in fact entered into the Russian Revolution. German imperialism is the thorn in the flesh of the Russian Revolution.

Yet this is not the full extent of the danger! The iron circle of the world war, which seemed to have been broken in the east, is once again relentlessly encompassing the whole world: the Entente is advancing



with Czech and Japanese troops from the north and east as a natural, inevitable consequence of Germany's offensive from the west and south. The flames of the world war are leaping across Russian soil and at any moment may engulf the Russian Revolution. To withdraw from the world war – even at the price of the greatest sacrifices – is something which, at the final analysis, it is simply impossible for Russia to do.

And now the most terrible prospect looms ahead of the Bolsheviks, the final stage of their path and thorns – an alliance between the Bolsheviks and Germany! This, to be sure, would forge the final link in that disastrous chain which the world war has hung around the neck of the Russian Revolution: first retreat, then capitulation and finally an alliance with German imperialism. In this way the Russian Revolution would be dragged by the world war, from which it sought to withdraw at any price, over to the opposite camp – from the side of the Entente while under the Tsar to German side under the Bolsheviks.[D]

It is to the everlasting credit of the Russian revolutionary proletariat that its first gesture following the outbreak of the revolution was a refusal to continue to fight as a levies of Franco-English imperialism. In view of the international situation, however, to render military service to German imperialism is even worse.

Trotsky is supposed to have said that if Russia had to choose between Japanese and German occupation, she would choose the latter, since Germany was far more ripe from revolution than Japan. The agonizing aspect of this speculation is obvious. For Japan is not Germany's only opponent; so, too, are England and France, and of

these no one is able to say whether or not their internal situations are more favourable than Germany's to the proletarian revolution.

Trotsky's reasoning is completely wrong, however, since the prospects and possibilities of a revolution in Germany are dimmed each time German militarism is strengthened or gains a victory.

But then other considerations, quite different from these apparently realistic ones, must be taken into account. An alliance between the Bolsheviks and German imperialism would be the most terrible moral blow that could be delivered against international socialism. Russia was the one last corner where revolutionary socialism, purity of principle and ideals, still held away. It was a place to which all sincere socialist elements in Germany and Europe could look in order to find relief from the disgust they felt at the practice of the West European labor movement, in order to arm themselves with the courage to persevere and in faith in pure actions and sacred words. The grotesque 'coupling' of Lenin and Hindenburg would extinguish the source of moral light in the east. It is obvious that the German rulers are holding a gun to the Soviet government's head and are exploiting its desperate situation in order to force this monstrous alliance upon it. But we hope that Lenin and his friends do not surrender at any price and that they answer this unreasonable demand with a categorical: 'This far but no further!'

A socialist revolution supported by German bayonets, the dictatorship of the proletariat under the patronage of German imperialism – this would be the most monstrous event that we could hope to witness. And what is more, it

would be pure utopianism. Quite apart from the fact that the moral prestige of the Bolsheviks would be destroyed in the country, they would lose all freedom of movement and independence even in domestic policy, and within a very short time would disappear from the scene altogether. Any child can see that Germany is only waiting for an opportunity of combining with a Milyukov, a Hetman or God knows what other obscure gentleman and political dabblers, to put an end to the Bolshevik splendor. They await merely an opportunity for casting Lenin and comrades (as they cast the Ukrainians, the Lybinskys and the rest) in the role of Trojan horse, a role which, when played out, means suicide for the actors.

If this were to be happen, all the sacrifices until now, including the great sacrifice of Brest-Litovsk, would have been totally in vain, for the price of the sacrifice would ultimately be moral bankruptcy. Any political destruction of the Bolsheviks in a honest struggle against the overwhelming forces and hostile pressures of the historical situation would be preferable to the moral destruction.

The Bolsheviks have certainly made a number of mistakes in their policies and are perhaps still making them – but where is the revolution in which no mistakes have been made! The notion of a revolutionary policy without mistakes, and moreover, in a totally unprecedented situation, is so absurd that it is worthy only of a German schoolmaster. If the so-called leaders of German socialism lose their so-called heads in such an unusual situation as a vote in the Reichstag, and if their hearts sink into their boots and they forget all the socialism they ever learned in situation in which the

simple abc of socialism clearly pointed the way – could one expect a party caught up in a truly thorny situation, in which it would show the world new wonders, not to make mistakes?

The awkward position that the Bolsheviks are in today, however, is, together with most of their mistakes, a consequence of basic insolubility of the problem posed to them by the international, above all the German, proletariat. To carry out the dictatorship of the proletariat and a socialist revolution in a single country surrounded by reactionary imperialist rule and in the fury of the bloodiest world war in human history – that is squaring the circle. Any socialist party would have to fail in this task and perish – whether or not it made self-renunciation the guiding star of its policies.

We would like to see the spineless jelly-fish, the moaners, the Axelrods, Dans, Grigoryanz [E] or whatever their name are, who, mouths frothing, sing their plaintive song against the Bolsheviks in foreign lands. And – just look! – they have found a sympathetic ear in such heroes as Ströbel, Bernstein and Kautsky; we would like to see these Germans in the Bolsheviks' place! All their superior understanding would rapidly exhaust itself in an alliance with the Milyukovs in domestic policy and with the Entente in foreign policy; to this would be added a conscious renunciation of all socialist reforms, or even of any move in this direction, in domestic policy – all this due to the conscious eunuch wisdom that says Russia is an agricultural country and Russian capitalism is not adequately cooked.

Such is the false logic of the objective situation: any socialist party that came to power in Russia today must

pursue the wrong tactics so long as it, as part of the international proletarian army, is left in the lurch by the main body of this army.

The blame of the Bolsheviks' failures is borne in the final analysis by the international proletariat and above all by the unprecedented and persistent baseness of German Social Democracy. This party which in peacetime pretended to march at the head of the world proletariat, which presumed to advise and lead the whole world, which in its own country counted at least ten million supporters of both sexes – this is the party which has nailed socialism to the cross twenty-four hours a day for the four years at the bidding of the ruling class like venal mercenaries of the Middle Ages.

The news now arriving from Russia about the situation of the Bolsheviks is a moving appeal to what vestiges of honour remain in the masses of German workers and soldiers. They have cold-bloodedly left the Russian Revolution to be torn to pieces, encircled and starve out. Let them now intervene, even at the eleventh hour, to save the revolution from the most terrible fate: from moral suicide, from an alliance with German imperialism.

There is only one solution to the tragedy in which Russia is caught up: an uprising at the rear of German imperialism, the German mass rising, which can signal the international revolution to put an end to this genocide. At this fateful moment, preserving the honour of the Russian Revolution is identical with vindicating that of the German proletariat and of international socialists.

#### Footnotes

[A] Most likely a reference to Lenin, who repeatedly stressed the need of self-determination for the national minorities of Russia; while in office Lenin convinced the Soviet government to give the national minority regions of Russia such as Finland, Ukraine, Belarussia, the Caucasusian states, the Baltic states and others the right to secede from Russia. The Soviet policy of self-determination for national minorities was changed sometime after Lenin left office.

[B] Field-Marshal von Eichhorn, commander of the German forces in the Ukraine, and Count Marbach-Harff, German ambassador, were assassinated by the Russian Socialist Revolutionary party in July 1918 in an attempt to renew the war with Germany.

[C] Rosa Luxemburg writes this soon after the hostilities and break between the two parties. Some months later the Left-SR party dissolved, with most members rejoining the Soviet government.

[D] This was popular speculation, beginning with the sealed train that carried Lenin, along with 31 other Socialists spanning the political spectrum, through Germany to Finland (Russia), during WWI. No kind of alliance was established between the Soviet Union and Germany. After the Entente's military failure in Russia, the opposite began: the Entente powers sided with Germany against the Soviet Union, and until 1939 allowed German militarism to rape small nations unhindered, assured that the German armies would march straight to Moscow.

[E] Leading Menshevik critics of the Soviet government.

# **THE SOCIALISATION OF SOCIETY**

**ROSA LUXEMBURG**

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The proletarian revolution that has now begun can have no other goal and no other result than the realisation of socialism. The working class must above all else strive to get the entire political power of the state into its own hands. Political power, however, is for us socialists only a means. The end for which we must use this power is the fundamental transformation of the entire economic relations.

Currently all wealth - the largest and best estates as well as the mines, works and the factories - belongs to a few Junkers and private capitalists. The great mass of the workers only get from these Junkers and capitalists a meagre wage to live on for hard work. The enrichment of a small number of idlers is the aim of today's economy.

This state of affairs should be remedied. All social wealth, the land with all its natural resources hidden in its bowels and on the surface, and all factories and works must be taken out of the hands of the exploiters and taken into common property of the people. The first duty

of a real workers' government is to declare by means of a series of decrees the most important means of production to be national property and place them under the control of society.

Only then, however, does the real and most difficult task begin: the reconstruction of the economy on a completely new basis.

At the moment production in every enterprise is conducted by individual capitalists on their own initiative. What -and in which way - is to be produced, where, when and how the produced goods are to be sold is determined by the industrialist. The workers do not see to all this, they are just living machines who have to carry out their work.

In a socialist economy this must be completely different! The private employer will disappear. Then no longer production aims towards the enrichment of one individual, but of delivering to the public at large the means of satisfying all its needs. Accordingly the factories, works and the agricultural enterprises must be reorganised according to a new way of looking at things:

Firstly: if production is to have the aim of securing for everyone a dignified life, plentiful food and providing other cultural means of existence, then the productivity of labour must be a great deal higher than it is now. The land must yield a far greater crop, the most advanced technology must be used in the factories, only the most productive coal and ore mines must be exploited, etc. It follows from this that socialisation will above all extend to the large enterprises in industry and agriculture. We do not need and do not want to dispossess the small



farmer and craftsman eking out a living with a small plot of land or workshop. In time they will all come to us voluntarily and will recognise the merits of socialism as against private property.

Secondly: in order that everyone in society can enjoy prosperity, everybody must work. Only somebody who performs some useful work for the public at large, whether by hand or brain, can be entitled to receive from society the means for satisfying his needs. A life of leisure like most of the rich exploiters currently lead will come to an end. A general requirement to work for all who are able to do so, from which small children, the aged and sick are exempted, is a matter of course in a socialist economy. The public at large must provide forthwith for those unable to work - not like now with paltry alms but with generous provision, socialised child-raising, enjoyable care for the elderly, public health care for the sick, etc.

Thirdly, in accordance with same outlook, i.e. for the general well-being, one must sensibly manage and be economic with both the means of production and labour. The squandering that currently takes place wherever one goes must stop. Naturally, the entire war and munitions industries must be abolished since a socialist society does not need murder weapons and, instead, the valuable materials and human labour used in them must be employed for useful products. Luxury industries which make all kinds of frippery for the idle rich must also be abolished, along with personal servants. All the human labour tied up here will be found a more worthy and useful occupation.

If we establish in this way a nation of workers, where everybody works for everyone, for the public good and benefit, then work itself must be organised quite differently. Nowadays work in industry, in agriculture and in the office is mostly a torment and a burden for the proletarians. One only goes to work because one has to, because one would not otherwise get the means to live. In a socialist society, where everyone works together for their own well being, the health of the workforce and its enthusiasm for work must be given the greatest consideration at work. Short working hours that do not exceed the normal capability, healthy workrooms, all methods of recuperation and a variety of work must be introduced in order that everyone enjoys doing their part.

All these great reforms, however, call for a corresponding human material. Currently the capitalist, his works foreman or supervisor stands behind the worker with his whip. Hunger drives the proletarian to work in the factory or in the office, for the Junker or the big farmer. The employers take care that time is not frittered away nor material wasted, and that both good and efficient work is delivered.

In a socialist society the industrialist with his whip ceases to exist. The workers are free and equal human beings who work for their own well-being and benefit. That means by themselves, working on their own initiative, not wasting public wealth, and delivering the most reliable and meticulous work. Every socialist concern needs of course its technical managers who know exactly what they are doing and give the directives so that everything runs smoothly and the best division of labour and the highest efficiency is achieved. Now it is a matter of willingly following these orders in full, of

maintaining discipline and order, of not causing difficulties or confusion.

In a word: the worker in a socialist economy must show that he can work hard and properly, keep discipline and give his best without the whip of hunger and without the capitalist and his slave-driver behind him. This calls for inner self-discipline, intellectual maturity, moral ardour, a sense of dignity and responsibility, a complete inner rebirth of the proletarian.

One cannot realise socialism with lazy, frivolous, egoistic, thoughtless and indifferent human beings. A socialist society needs human beings from whom each one in his place, is full of passion and enthusiasm for the general well-being, full of self-sacrifice and sympathy for his fellow human beings, full of courage and tenacity in order to dare to attempt the most difficult.

We do not need, however, to wait perhaps a century or a decade until such a species of human beings develop. Right now, in the struggle, in the revolution, the mass of the proletarians learn the necessary idealism and soon acquire the intellectual maturity. We also need courage and endurance, inner clarity and self-sacrifice, to at all be able to lead the revolution to victory. In enlisting capable fighters for the current revolution, we are also creating the future socialist workers which a new order requires as its fundament.

The working class youth is particularly well-qualified for these great tasks. As the future generation they will indeed, quite certainly, already constitute the real foundation of the socialist economy. It is already now its job to demonstrate that it is equal to the great task of

being the bearer of the humanity's future. An entire old world still needs overthrowing and an entirely new one needs constructing. But we will do it young friends, won't we? We will do it! Just as it says in the song:

We surely lack nothing, my wife, my child,  
except all that which through us prospers,  
to be as free as the birds:  
only the time!

#### Notes

The question of how a future socialist society may look is scarcely found in the Marxist literature. Rosa Luxemburg took up this question in an article written in the heat of the revolution, in December 1918. It was reproduced in various newspapers and journals: in the Hamburger Volkszeitung on 20. December 1918, in the Jugend-Internationale (Stuttgart) on 28th December under the title "German Bolshevism" and in the Volksblatt (Haale/saar) on 6th January 1919 under the title "Nationalisation" [Vergesellschaftung].

# **A CALL TO THE WORKERS OF THE WORLD**

**ROSA LUXEMBURG, KARL LIEBKNECHT, KLARA  
ZETKIN AND FRANZ MEHRING**

Written: December 25, 1918

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[Note: The revolutionary aspirations of May Day are magnificently expressed in this appeal of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Klara Zetkin, issued December 25, 1918.]

**PROLETARIANS! Men and Women of Labor!**

**Comrades!**

The revolution in Germany has come! The masses of the soldiers who for years were driven to slaughter for the sake of capitalistic profits; the masses of workers, who for four years were exploited, crushed, and starved, have revolted. Prussian militarism, that fearful tool of oppression, that scourge of humanity--lies broken on the ground. Its most noticeable representatives, and therewith the most noticeable of those guilty of this war, the Kaiser and the Crown Prince, have fled from the country. Workers' and Soldiers' Councils have been formed everywhere.

Workers of all countries, we do not say that in Germany all power actually lies in the hands of the working

people, that the complete triumph of the proletarian revolution has already been attained. There still sit in the government all those Socialists who in August, 1914, abandoned our most precious possession, the International, who for four years betrayed the German working class and the International.

But, workers of all countries, now the German proletarian himself speaks to you. We believe we have the right to appear before your forum in his name. From the first day of this war we endeavored to do our international duty by fighting that criminal government with all our power and branding it as the one really guilty of the war.

Now at this moment we are justified before history, before the International and before the German proletariat. The masses agree with us enthusiastically, constantly widening circles of the proletariat share the conviction that the hour has struck for a settlement with capitalistic class rule.

But this great task cannot be accomplished by the German proletariat alone; it can only fight and triumph by appealing to the solidarity of the proletarians of the whole world.

Comrades of the belligerent countries, we are aware of your situation. We know full well that your governments, now that they have won the victory, are dazzling the eyes of many strata of the people with the external brilliancy of their triumph. We know that they thus succeed through the success of the murdering in making its causes and aims forgotten.

But we also know that in your countries the proletariat made the most fearful sacrifices of flesh and blood, that it is weary of the dreadful butchery, that the proletarian is now returning to his home, and is finding want and misery there, while fortunes amounting to billions are heaped up in the hands of a few capitalists. He has recognized, and will continue to recognize, that your governments, too, have carried on the war for the sake of the big money bags. And he will further perceive that your governments, when they spoke of "justice and civilization" and of the "protection of small nations," meant capitalist profits as surely as did ours when it talked about the "defence of home"; and that the peace of "justice" and of the "League of Nations" are but a part of the same base brigand that produced the peace of Brest-Litovsk. Here as well as there the same shameless lust for booty, the same desire for oppression, the same determination to exploit to the limit the brutal preponderance of murderous steel.

The Imperialism of all countries knows no "understanding," it knows only one right--capital's profits: it knows only one language--the sword: it knows only one method--violence. And if it is now talking in all countries, in yours as well ours, about the "League of Nations," "disarmament," "rights of small nations," "self-determination of the peoples," it is merely using the customary lying phrases of the rulers for the purpose of lulling to sleep the watchfulness of the proletariat.

Proletarians of all countries! This must be the last war! We owe that to the twelve million murdered victims, we owe that to our children, we owe that to humanity.

Europe has been ruined by this damnable slaughter. Twelve million bodies cover the grewsome scenes of this imperialistic crime. The flower of youth and the best man power of the peoples have been mowed down. Uncounted productive forces have been annihilated. Humanity is almost ready to bleed to death from the unexampled blood-letting of history. Victors and vanquished stand at the edge of the abyss. Humanity is threatened with famine, a stoppage of the entire mechanism of production, plagues, and degeneration.

The great criminals of this fearful anarchy, of this unchained chaos--the ruling classes--are not able to control their own creation. The beast of capital that conjured up the hell of the world war is incapable of banishing it, of restoring real order, of insuring bread and work, peace and civilization, justice and liberty, to tortured humanity.

What is being prepared by the ruling classes as peace and justice is only a new work of brutal force from which the hydra of oppression, hatred and fresh bloody wars raises its thousand heads.

Socialism alone is in a position to complete the great work of permanent peace, to heal the thousand wounds from which humanity is bleeding, to transform the plains of Europe, trampled down by the passage of the apocryphal horseman of war, into blossoming gardens, to conjure up ten productive forces for every one destroyed, to awaken all the physical and moral energies of humanity, and to replace hatred and dissension with internal solidarity, harmony, and respect for every human being.



If representatives of the proletarians of all countries could but clasp hands under the banner of Socialism for the purpose of making peace, then peace would be concluded in a few hours. Then there will be no disputed questions about the left bank of the Rhine, Mesopotamia, Egypt or colonies. Then there will be only one people: the toiling human beings of all races and tongues. Then there will be only one right: the equality of all men. Then there will be only one aim: prosperity and progress for everybody.

Humanity is facing the alternative: Dissolution and downfall in capitalist anarchy, or regeneration through the social revolution. The hour of fate has struck. If you believe in Socialism, it is now time to show it by deeds. If you are Socialists, now is the time to act.

Proletarians of all countries, if we now summon you for a common struggle it is not done for the sake of the German capitalists who, under the label of "German nation," are trying to escape the consequences of their own crimes: it is being done for your sake as well as for ours. Remember that your victorious capitalists stand ready to suppress in blood our revolution, which they fear as they do their own. You yourselves have not become any freer through the "victory," you have only become still more enslaved. If your ruling classes succeed in throttling the proletarian revolution in Germany, and in Russia, then they will turn against you with redoubled violence. Your capitalists hope that victory over us and over revolutionary Russia will give them the power to scourge you with a whip of scorpions.

Therefore the proletariat of Germany looks toward you in this hour. Germany is pregnant with the social

revolution, but Socialism can only be realized by the proletariat of the world.

And therefore, we call to you: "Arise for the struggle! Arise for action! The time for empty manifestos, platonic resolutions, and high-sounding words is gone! The hour of action has struck for the International!" We ask you to elect Workers' and Soldiers' Councils everywhere that will seize political power, and together with us, will restore peace.

Not Lloyd George and Poincare, not Sonnino, Wilson, and Ersberger or Scheidemann, must be allowed to make peace. Peace must be concluded under the waving banner of the Socialist world revolution.

Proletarians of all countries! We call upon you to complete the work of Socialist liberation, to give a human aspect to the disfigured world and to make true those words with which we often greeted each other in the old days and which we sang as we parted: "And the Internationale shall be the human race".

## **THE BEGINNING**

**ROSA LUXEMBURG**

First published: Die Rote Fahne, November 18th, 1918

The revolution has begun. What is called for now is not jubilation at what has been accomplished, not triumph over the beaten foe, but the strictest self-criticism and iron concentration of energy in order to continue the work we have begun. For our accomplishments are small and the foe has not been beaten.

What has been achieved? The monarchy has been swept away, supreme governing power has been transferred into the hands of the workers' and soldiers' representatives. But the monarchy was never the real enemy; it was only a facade, the frontispiece of imperialism. It was not the Hohenzollerns who unleashed the world war, set the four corners of the globe afire, and brought Germany to the brink of the abyss. The monarchy, like every bourgeois government, was the executive of the ruling classes. The imperialist bourgeoisie, the rule of the capitalist class – this is the criminal who must be held accountable for the genocide.

The abolition of the rule of capitalism, the realization of the social order of socialism – this and nothing less is the historical theme of the present revolution. This is an huge work which cannot be completed in the twinkling of an eye by a few degrees from above; it can be born

only of the conscious action of the mass of workers in the cities and in the country, and brought successfully through the maze of difficulties only by the highest intellectual maturity and unflagging idealism of the masses of the people.

The path of the revolution follows clearly from its ends, its method follows from its task. All power in the hands of the working masses, in the hands of the workers' and soldiers' councils, protection of the work of revolution against its lurking enemies – this is the guiding principle of all measures to be taken by the revolutionary government.

Every step, every act by the government must, like a compass, point in this directions:

- \* re-election and improvement of the local workers' and soldiers' councils so that the first chaotic and impulsive gestures of their formation are replaced by a conscious process of understanding the goals, tasks and methods of the revolution;
- \* regularly scheduled meetings of these representatives of the masses and the transfer of real political power from the small committee of the Executive Council into the broader basis of the W. and S. [workers' and soldiers'] councils;
- \* immediate convocation of the national council of workers and soldiers in order to establish the proletariat of all Germany as a class, as a compact political power, and to make them the bulwark and impetus of the revolution;

- \* immediate organization not of the ‘farmers’, but of the agrarian proletariat and smallholders who, as a class, have until now been outside the revolution;
- \* formation of a proletarian Red Guard for the permanent protection of the revolution, and training of a workers’ militia in order to prepare the whole proletariat to be on guard and all times;
- \* suppression of the old organs of administration, justice and the army of absolutist militarist police State;
- \* immediate confiscation of the dynastic property and possessions and of landed property as initial temporary measures to guarantee the people’s food supply, since hunger is the most dangerous ally of the counter-revolution;
- \* immediate convocation of the World Labour Congress in Germany in order to emphasize clearly and distinctly the socialist and international character of the revolution, for only in the International, in the world revolution of the proletariat, is the future of the German revolution anchored.
- \* We have mentioned only the first necessary steps. What is the present revolutionary government doing?
- \* It is leaving the administrative organs of the State intact from top to bottom, in the hands of yesterday’s pillars of Hohenzollern absolutism and tomorrow’s tools of the counter-revolution;
- \* it is convening the constituent National Assembly, thus creating bourgeois counter-weight to the workers’

and soldiers' representatives, and, by doing this, is diverting the revolution on to the track of a bourgeois revolution and spiriting away the socialist goals of the revolution;

- \* it is doing nothing to demolish the continuing power of the capitalist class rule;

- \* it is doing everything to placate the bourgeoisie, to proclaim the sacrosanctity of private property, to safeguard the inviolability of the distribution of capital;

- \* it is allowing the active counter-revolution, which is dogging its every step, to go its own way without appealing to the masses, without loudly warning the people against it.

Law! Order! Order! Law! This is the cry resounding from all sides, in all proclamations of the government; this is the joyous echo from all the bourgeois camps. A strident outcry against the bogey of 'anarchy' and 'putschism' – the well-known infernal music of a bourgeoisie concerned for its fireproof safes, its property and its profits – in the loudest note of the day, and the revolutionary workers' and soldiers' government is placidly tolerating this general march to mount an offensive against socialism, indeed it is participating in it in word and deed.

The result of the first week of the revolution is as follows: in the state of the Hoherzollerns, not much has basically changed; the workers' and soldiers' government is acting as the deputy of the imperialistic government that has gone bankrupt. All its acts and omissions are governed by fear of the working masses.

Even before the revolution has acquired verve and momentum, its only vital force, namely its socialist and proletarian character, will have been spirited away.

Everything is in order. The reactionary state of the civilized world will not become a revolutionary people's state within twenty-four hours. Soldiers who yesterday, as gendarmes of the reaction, were murdering the revolutionary proletariat in Finland, Russia and Ukraine, and workers who calmly allowed this to happen, have not become in twenty-four hours supporters of socialism or clearly aware of their goals.

The picture of the German revolution corresponds to the inner ripeness of the German situation. The government of the German revolution at its present stage is in the hands of Scheidemann and Ebert, and who in *Die Freiheit* solemnly swear that one can form a 'purely socialist government' with them, thus qualify themselves as the appropriate partners in the firm at this initial provisional stage.

But revolution do not stand still. Their vital law is to advance rapidly, to outgrow themselves. It is already being driven forward by its inner contradictions from this initial stage. The situation can be comprehended as a beginning, as a condition untenable over the long haul. If the counter-revolution is not to gain the upper hand all along the line, the masses must be on their guard.

A beginning has been made. What happens next is not in the hands of the dwarfs who would hold up the course of the revolution, who would put a spoke in the wheel of world history. It is the realization of the ultimate goal of socialism which is on today's agenda of world history.

The German revolution has now hit upon the path illuminated by this star. Step by step, through storm and stress, through battle and torment and misery and victory, it will reach its goal.

It must!



## **ORDER PREVAILS IN BERLIN**

**ROSA LUXEMBURG**

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[The following editorial is the last known piece of writing by Rosa Luxemburg. It was written just after the Spartacus uprising was crushed by the German government and in the hours prior to the arrest and murder of her and Karl Liebknecht by the Freikorps.—A.L.]

"Order prevails in Warsaw!" declared Minister Sebastiani to the Paris Chamber of Deputies in 1831, when after having stormed the suburb of Praga, Paskevich's marauding troops invaded the Polish capital to begin their butchery of the rebels.

"Order prevails in Berlin!" So proclaims the bourgeois press triumphantly, so proclaim Ebert and Noske, and the officers of the "victorious troops," who are being cheered by the petty-bourgeois mob in Berlin waving handkerchiefs and shouting "Hurrah!" The glory and honor of German arms have been vindicated before world history. Those who were routed in Flanders and the Argonne have restored their reputation with a brilliant victory -- over three hundred

"Spartacists" in the Vorwarts building. The days when glorious German troops first crossed into Belgium, and the days of General von Emmich, the conqueror of Liege, pale before the exploits of Reinhardt and Co. in the streets of Berlin. The government's rampaging troops massacred the mediators who had tried to negotiate the surrender of the Vorwarts building, using their rifle butts to beat them beyond recognition. Prisoners who were lined up against the wall and butchered so violently that skull and brain tissue splattered everywhere. In the sight of glorious deeds such as those, who would remember the ignominious defeat at the hands of the French, British, and Americans? Now "Spartacus" is the enemy, Berlin is the place where our officers can savor triumph, and Noske, "the worker," is the general who can lead victories where Ludendorff failed.

Who is not reminded of that drunken celebration by the "law and order" mob in Paris, that Bacchanal of the bourgeoisie celebrated over the corpses of the Communards? That same bourgeoisie who had just shamefully capitulated to the Prussians and abandoned the capital to the invading enemy, taking to their heels like abject cowards. Oh, how the manly courage of those darling sons of the bourgeoisie, of the "golden youth," and of the officer corps flared back to life against the poorly armed, starving Parisian proletariat and their defenseless women and children. How these courageous sons of Mars, who had buckled before the foreign enemy, raged with bestial cruelty against defenseless people, prisoners, and the fallen.

"Order prevails in Warsaw!" "Order prevails in Paris!" "Order prevails in Berlin!" Every half-century that is what the bulletins from the guardians of "order" proclaim from one center of the world-historic struggle to the next. And the jubilant "victors" fail to notice that any "order" that

needs to be regularly maintained through bloody slaughter heads inexorably toward its historic destiny; its own demise.

What was this recent "Spartacus week" in Berlin? What has it brought? What does it teach us? While we are still in the midst of battle, while the counterrevolution is still howling about their victory, revolutionary proletarians must take stock of what happened and measure the events and their results against the great yardstick of history. The revolution has no time to lose, it continues to rush headlong over still-open graves, past "victories" and "defeats," toward its great goal. The first duty of fighters for international socialism is to consciously follow the revolution's principles and its path.

Was the ultimate victory of the revolutionary proletariat to be expected in this conflict? Could we have expected the overthrow Ebert-Scheidemann and the establishment of a socialist dictatorship? Certainly not, if we carefully consider all the variables that weigh upon the question. The weak link in the revolutionary cause is the political immaturity of the masses of soldiers, who still allow their officers to misuse them, against the people, for counterrevolutionary ends. This alone shows that no lasting revolutionary victory was possible at this juncture. On the other hand, the immaturity of the military is itself a symptom of the general immaturity of the German revolution.

The countryside, from which a large percentage of rank-and-file soldiers come, has hardly been touched by the revolution. So far, Berlin has remained virtually isolated from the rest of the country. The revolutionary centers in the provinces -- the Rhineland, the northern coast,

Brunswick, Saxony, Wurttemberg -- have been heart and soul behind the Berlin workers, it is true. But for the time being they still do not march forward in lockstep with one another, there is still no unity of action, which would make the forward thrust and fighting will of the Berlin working class incomparably more effective. Furthermore, there is -- and this is only the deeper cause of the political immaturity of the revolution -- the economic struggle, the actual volcanic font that feeds the revolution, is only in its initial stage. And that is the underlying reason why the revolutionary class struggle, is in its infancy.

From all this that flows the fact a decisive, lasting victory could not be counted upon at this moment. Does that mean that the past week's struggle was an "error"? The answer is yes if we were talking about a premeditated "raid" or "putsch." But what triggered this week of combat? As in all previous cases, such as December 6 and December 24, it was a brutal provocation by the government. Like the bloodbath against defenseless demonstrators in Chausseestrasse, like the butchery of the sailors, this time the assault on the Berlin police headquarters was the cause of all the events that followed. The revolution does not develop evenly of its own volition, in a clear field of battle, according to a cunning plan devised by clever "strategists."

The revolution's enemies can also take the initiative, and indeed as a rule they exercise it more frequently than does the revolution. Faced with the brazen provocation by Ebert-Scheidemann, the revolutionary workers were forced to take up arms. Indeed, the honor of the revolution depended upon repelling the attack immediately, with full-force in order to prevent the counterrevolution from being encouraged to press forward, and lest the revolutionary

ranks of the proletariat and the moral credit of the German revolution in the International be shaken.

The immediate and spontaneous outpouring of resistance from the Berlin masses flowed with such energy and determination that in the first round the moral victory was won by the "streets."

Now, it is one of the fundamental, inner laws of revolution that it never stands still, it never becomes passive or docile at any stage, once the first step has been taken. The best defense is a strong blow. This is the elementary rule of any fight but it is especially true at each and every stage of the revolution. It is a demonstration of the healthy instinct and fresh inner strength of the Berlin proletariat that it was not appeased by the reinstatement of Eichorn (which it had demanded), rather the proletariat spontaneously occupied the command posts of the counter-revolution: the bourgeois press, the semi-official press agency, the Vorwarts office. All these measures were a result of the masses' instinctive realization that, for its part, the counter-revolution would not accept defeat but would carry on with a general demonstration of its strength.

Here again we stand before one of the great historical laws of the revolution against which are smashed to pieces all the sophistry and arrogance of the petty USPD variety "revolutionaries" who look for any pretext to retreat from struggle. As soon as the fundamental problem of the revolution has been clearly posed -- and in this revolution it is the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidemann government, the primary obstacle to the victory of socialism -- then this basic problem will rise again and again in its entirety. With the inevitability of a natural law, every individual chapter in the struggle will unveil this problem to its full extent

regardless of how unprepared the revolution is ready to solve it or how unripe the situation may be. "Down with Ebert-Scheidemann!" -- this slogan springs forth inevitably in each revolutionary crisis as the only formula summing up all partial struggles. Thus automatically, by its own internal, objective logic, bringing each episode in the struggle to a boil, whether one wants it to or not.

Because of the contradiction in the early stages of the revolutionary process between the task being sharply posed and the absence of any preconditions to resolve it, individual battles of the revolution end in formal defeat. But revolution is the only form of "war" -- and this is another peculiar law of history -- in which the ultimate victory can be prepared only by a series of "defeats."

What does the entire history of socialism and of all modern revolutions show us? The first spark of class struggle in Europe, the revolt of the silk weavers in Lyon in 1831, ended with a heavy defeat; the Chartist movement in Britain ended in defeat; the uprising of the Parisian proletariat in the June days of 1848 ended with a crushing defeat; and the Paris commune ended with a terrible defeat. The whole road of socialism -- so far as revolutionary struggles are concerned -- is paved with nothing but thunderous defeats. Yet, at the same time, history marches inexorably, step by step, toward final victory! Where would we be today without those "defeats," from which we draw historical experience, understanding, power and idealism? Today, as we advance into the final battle of the proletarian class war, we stand on the foundation of those very defeats; and we can do without any of them, because each one contributes to our strength and understanding.

The revolutionary struggle is the very antithesis of the parliamentary struggle. In Germany, for four decades we had nothing but parliamentary "victories." We practically walked from victory to victory. And when faced with the great historical test of August 4, 1914, the result was the devastating political and moral defeat, an outrageous debacle and rot without parallel. To date, revolutions have given us nothing but defeats. Yet these unavoidable defeats pile up guarantee upon guarantee of the future final victory.

There is but one condition. The question of why each defeat occurred must be answered. Did it occur because the forward-storming combative energy of the masses collided with the barrier of unripe historical conditions, or was it that indecision, vacillation, and internal frailty crippled the revolutionary impulse itself?

Classic examples of both cases are the February revolution in France on the one hand and the March revolution in Germany on the other. The courage of the Parisian proletariat in the year 1848 has become a fountain of energy for the class struggle of the entire international proletariat. The deplorable events of the German March revolution of the same year have weighed down the whole development of modern Germany like a ball and chain. In the particular history of official German Social Democracy, they have reverberated right up into the most recent developments in the German revolution and on into the dramatic crisis we have just experienced.

How does the defeat of "Spartacus week" appear in the light of the above historical question? Was it a case of raging, uncontrollable revolutionary energy colliding with an insufficiently ripe situation, or was it a case of weak and indecisive action?

Both! The crisis had a dual nature. The contradiction between the powerful, decisive, aggressive offensive of the Berlin masses on the one hand and the indecisive, half-hearted vacillation of the Berlin leadership on the other is the mark of this latest episode. The leadership failed. But a new leadership can and must be created by the masses and from the masses. The masses are the crucial factor. They are the rock on which the ultimate victory of the revolution will be built. The masses were up to the challenge, and out of this "defeat" they have forged a link in the chain of historic defeats, which is the pride and strength of international socialism. That is why future victories will spring from this "defeat."

"Order prevails in Berlin!" You foolish lackeys! Your "order" is built on sand. Tomorrow the revolution will "rise up again, clashing its weapons," and to your horror it will proclaim with trumpets blazing:

I was, I am, I shall be!



